HISTORY, MEMORY AND TRAUMA IN CONTEMPORARY AFRO-LATIN AMERICAN AND AFRO-CARIBBEAN LITERATURE BY WOMEN

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To my parents.

To members of my family whom I have lost during the Civil War in Burundi.
Je pense toujours à vous. Je ne vous ai pas oubliés.

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Amina Butoyi Shabani

HISTORY, MEMORY AND TRAUMA IN CONTEMPORARY AFRO-LATIN AMERICAN AND AFRO-CARIBBEAN LITERATURE BY WOMEN

This dissertation studies how recent novels by contemporary Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean women writers contest dominant national histories, proposing new genealogies that recover black women as active national subjects and render their experiences visible. I argue that, by both revisiting and recreating the colonial archive, these novels move away from monolithic representations of African slaves and their descendants, and depict a more complex and nuanced view of the slave trade, the institution of slavery, and its legacy. Using theories of memory and trauma, I study the use of silence as a literary device to represent the intergenerational trauma of slavery; as a metaphor for both the archival absence of direct voices and the absence of physical traces (monuments, neighborhoods, etc); and as a strategy to address how African heritages have been overlooked in communities defined by miscegenation or indigenous heritage. I argue that each novel can be read as what Pierre Nora called a "lieu de mémoire," decrying the erasure of slavery in historical discourse and proposing new ways to memorialize and honor the lives of African slaves and their descendants. In chapter one, I study *Jonatás y Manuela* (1994) by Ecuadorian Luz Argentina Chiriboga, analyzing her use of silence and maternal genealogies to reclaim the role of women slaves during the period of independence and nation formation in Ecuador. In chapter two, I study the intersection of art, memory and trauma in *Malambo* (2001) by Peruvian Lucía Charún-Illescas. In chapter three, I examine the transmission of intergenerational trauma in *Rosalie l'infâme* (2003) by Évelyne Trouillot and *Le livre d'Emma* (2001) by Marie-Célie

Agnant, both from Haiti. In chapter four, I conclude by analyzing, with the help of new museum theory, how *Fe en disfraz* (2009) by Puerto Rican Mayra Santos Febres confronts the problematics of national and transnational memorializing of slavery and its legacy in the present.

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Table of Contents

Introduction

In 2006, the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, formerly known as the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, presented an innovative exhibition ,"The African Presence in Mexico: From Yanga to Present", documenting 500 years of the legacy of African slaves and their descendants in Mexico. The exhibition highlighted the biography of a maroon slave named Yanga and a brief history of communities like Veracruz and Guerrero known for their noticeable population of African descent. A series of photographs was included to illustrate their participation in the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920) and examples of African influences in dances, food and music. The exhibition concluded with a list of famous Afro-Mexicans actors, singers and athletes and a note on the use of the term "Afro-Mexican". Beyond the objective of informing the public, this groundbreaking exhibition also revisits traditional definitions of Mexican heritage, especially the indigenous figure as a symbol of national identity. Indeed, it was not until 1992 that the Mexican official government had recognized that Africa is the third root of Mexican identity. Along the same lines, the exhibition reaffirmed the multiple contributions of Afro-Mexicans in public spheres and sought to inspire new discussions about the intersection of race and citizenship.

In 2010, I stumbled upon documents related to the history of slavery in Latin America at the Lilly Library in Bloomington, IN. The first one was a will outlining the last wishes of Juana Gaima who identified herself as "morena libre natural de la Africa de nación, de Mujimbe y vecina de Eita ciudad" (n.p). Written on January 1st 1841 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the will follows stylistic conventions of the period and employs a religious language. It includes information about burial arrangements, last payments to

the doctor and distribution of Gaima's furniture and belongings to two other men identified as "morenos libres". The second document, dated July 23rd 1821 from Perú, is a petition asking runaway slaves to return to their masters. The order specifies that those who escaped had to return within 15 days with the stolen cattle and that failure to comply would result in severe punishments. Lastly, from Mexico, the third document is a petition written in 1645 in the name of Manuela asking for authorization to sell her slave Maria due to financial constraints. The content of each document is somewhat mediated by transcription, convention writing and interpretation of the facts by the scribe and the reader. Nonetheless, these unexpected findings in the archive prompted additional questions about the lives of African women slaves and their descendants, their impact on the society where they lived, their worldview and self-representation.

My dissertation studies narratives produced by contemporary women writers of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean[1]. In particular, I examine how these authors revisit the colonial past and place African women slaves at the forefront of the main narrative, rendering them visible and highlighting their agency. These authors are contesting hegemonic national discourses by including a variety of experiences of black women and weaving alternative narratives that succeed in presenting a more nuanced vision of the process of nation formation. In doing so, these Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean contemporary writers challenge a homogenizing narrative of national identities in their respective countries. This is particularly relevant in relation to *mestizaje* (miscegenation), the hegemonic racial ideology of 20th century national discourses

[1] To avoid the cumbersome repetition of French and Spanish, the terms Latin America and Caribbean are used. This dissertation focuses on the Francophone and Hispanophone contexts and traditions.

against which these novels position themselves. In the French and Spanish Caribbean contexts, the figure of la *mulata* served as a symbol of national identities that acknowledged yet simultaneously silenced their African heritage. In the Andean region, on the other hand, Afro-Latin Americans have had to contend with a discourse of *mestizaje* that highlighted hispanic and indigenous heritages, but completely erased africanness from national discourses of identity.

My dissertation focuses mostly on literary production published over the span of the last 25 years and includes *Jonatás y Manuela* (1994) by Luz Argentina Chiriboga from Ecuador, *Malambo* (2001) by Lucía Charún-Illescas from Perú, from Haiti *Rosalie l'infâme* (2003) by Évelyne Trouillot and *Le livre d'Emma* (2001) by Marie-Célie Agnant, and *Fe en disfraz* (2009) by Mayra Santos Febres from Puerto Rico. In this introduction, I first provide a brief overview of recent scholarship in order to showcase how contemporary historians are revealing nuanced processes of the Atlantic slave trade in the Spanish-American context. Then I will present the main developments in the field of Afro-Latin American literature and how in each period, women's voices were excluded or barely represented. Lastly, I position my contribution to the field and the theoretical framework for each chapter.

Brief Overview of Afro-Latin American Representations in History and Literature

> "No somos indios ni europeos, sino una especie media entre los legítimos propietarios del país y los usurpadores españoles: en suma, siendo nosotros americanos por nacimiento y nuestros derechos los de Europa, tenemos que disputar éstos a los del país y que mantenernos en él contra la invasión de los invasores".
> Simón Bolívar, *Carta de Jamaíca* (1815)

In this well-known document, Simón Bolívar (1783-1830) urges other nations to support Latin American colonies seeking to gain their independence from Spain. Bolívar uses the negation form to define the identity of creoles "neither Spaniards nor Indigenous" and the nebulous space that they occupy. Jean Franco emphasizes the importance of *Carta de Jamaíca* (1815) by stating that: "with brevity and insight, Bolívar not only shows that the Spanish Empire will break into small nations just as the Roman Empire had done but also that these new nations would have difficulty in establishing any sense of identity, since they were neither properly European nor wholly indigenous" (39). However, colonial Latin American societies were highly diverse and the binary "Indigenous or Europeans" fails to recognize African heritages in the conceptualization and formation of the nineteenth century nation-state. In the introduction of *Slavery and Beyond* (1995), Darién J. Davis explains "in the nineteenth century, liberal elites preferred to focus on development issues rather than on race relations or racial origins" (xv). During that period, discourses on miscegenation emphasized the figure of the "indio" (the indigenous) as a national symbol overlooking the African heritage.

The African presence in the Americas and the Iberian peninsula has been recorded since very early on in historical and literary texts from the colonial period to the wars of independence. The first wave of scholars in the forties revisited the Chronicles of the conquest and colonization and relied on methodologies drawn from the social sciences in order to understand the legacy of African slaves and their descendants. For instance, the anthropologist Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán or the historian Frederick Bowser retraced the country of origin of African slaves, their arrival in the Americas, their ethnic makeup and provided estimated population census data.

For the past sixteen years, new scholars have been privileging interdisciplinary approaches, returning to historical archives with the objective of uncovering narratives that reveal new understandings of the intersection of race, gender and citizenship in the colonial period. For instance, José R. Jouve Martín and Nancy Van Deuseun, respectively, study the history of black doctors and religious servants of African descent in colonial Lima. For her part, Nicole Foote looks at the different ways African slaves and their descendants were involved in the process of nation formation during the nineteenth century. These new works aim to understand the ways in which African slaves and their descendants negotiated their social status, cultural differences and their own system of beliefs. The main noticeable shift is how scholars are taking into account the history of blackness in Iberia during the sixteenth century and weaving it into a more comprehensive look into racial discourses and processes in Latin America. For instance, Jane Landers[2] argues that race in Latin America cannot be understood without the peninsular context. Similarly, Leo Garofalo draws attention to the diversity of Afro-Iberian populations in Andalusia and Southern Portugal and their contributions to Colonial Latin America.

These conclusions change the narrative of slave trade in Latin America from a direct Africa-South America route and also invite the analysis of lesser-studied slave trade routes. This approach is at the core of Alex Borucki's scholarship as he examines

[2] In the introduction of *Slaves, Subjects and Subverses (2006),* Jane Landers demonstrates through an analysis of legal documents and baptismal acts among other documents that before Columbus' first travels to the New World, there already existed a free community of Africans who considered themselves "ciudadanos" of Spain yet also maintained cultural ties with the African continent. Thus, the first Africans who came to Latin America were from Southern Iberia before 1502 and they were part of the Spanish conquest as they held a variety of offices in the navy.

social identities that emerged and developed in countries that are usually not considered part of the African diaspora. In *From Shipmates to Soldiers* (2015), Borucki states that "the Río de la Plata region-what is today Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay- has a long but neglected history of slave trading and slavery" (1). In *Africans to Spanish America* (2012), Sherwin K. Bryant, Rachel Sarah O'Toole and Ben Vinson, III look at zones of contact between Panama and Peru, specifically communities on the coasts. They explain that: "work in these areas represents new ways of seeing the African Diaspora and marks evolutionary steps in the growth of the subfield of Afro-Latin American history" (3). In sum, these new studies are creating new parameters that embrace the study of the slave trade by focusing on lesser-known routes, by recognizing the established communities of Africans in the Iberian peninsula and by acknowledging the constant movements of populations, knowledge and the formation of new identities across continents.

In her analysis of critical historical works published in the past twenty years, Rachel O'Toole brings attention to the challenges faced by historians:

> Nonetheless, the challenge remains, however, to explore how enslaved men and women in colonial Latin America understood their own institutions and collectivities. One avenue is to examine spaces unreachable or unknowable to slaveholders. Another is to assume that within legal acts of agency (brought to us often by a rich Iberian juridical tradition) and the structures of slavery lay clues to Afro-Latin American consciousness. These subjectivities could be expressed in political demands, multiple identities, and shifting collectivities rooted in African Diaspora dynamics in addition to colonial court tactics. (1097)

Indeed, O'Toole argues that current research on Afro-Latin American history embodies a shift toward focusing on subjectivities: "by centering research on the lives, preoccupations, challenges, and goals of Africans and their descendants, historians can continue to make Afro-Latin Americans the subjects rather than the objects of their scholarship" (1097).

Nonetheless, even in these recent studies, there is a disproportionate lack of information regarding women's experiences despite the invaluable contributions of Landers and Van Deusen who investigated religious servants of African descent in Peru. Borucki's arguments bring some insight to this void in the contexts of some Latin American countries. He explains this lack of information by sharing that "the notaries producing the evidence marriage files only requested testimonies about the status of grooms" (11). He also adds that "Spanish gender constructions barred women as institutional intermediaries. Thus men of African ancestry represented black communities in negotiations with the dominant sectors of society" (12). On the other hand, in *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada* (2005), José Ramón Jouve Martín illustrates how women of African descent were more informed than men about legal procedures and had frequent access to them because freedom was gained in a matrilineal manner. María Elisa Velázquez Gutiérrez has also published an extensive study of women of African descent in Mexico during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Gutiérrez looks at their ethnic background and reveals the multiple ways they played an active role in the economic and social fabric in their communities through their works in various sectors. Despite these important contributions, there is still a void in historiography about the experiences of women

slaves and their descendants in comparison to their male counterparts, due, in part, to silences in the archive.

As new research in history complicates our understanding of the slave trade in the Latin American context, the field of Afro-Latin American literature has also evolved since the decade of the seventies and it is marked by three distinct periods. In the 1970s, Richard Jackson played a critical role in assessing the emerging field of Afro- Latin American literature as he compiled a bibliography of writers of African descent and encouraged the inclusion of their works in the Latin American canon. However, his critical works exclude the contributions of Afro-Latin American women writers. The study of literary production by women writers remained scarce and limited to the analysis of poems associated with the negritude and negrismo movements[3]. It was not until 1982 that the creation of the journal *Afro-Hispanic Review* played a crucial role as it became a forum of literary and scholarly exchanges as well as a site of publication for many non canonized Afro-Latin American women writers.

In the 1990s, several anthologies and collections addressed the void by providing bibliographies of emerging Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean women writers as well as resources to further scholarly research. Among these anthologies, the publication of *Out of Kumbla* in 1990 is one of the first attempts to put at the forefront several Afro-

[3] The negritude and negrismo movements share as a commonality the purpose to rehabilitate the appreciation of African culture and the representation of a black identity. Often studied with the avant-garde movements at the beginning of the twentieth century, the negrismo movement attempts to represent African heritage through the representation of language and experience in Puerto Rico and Cuba with Luis Palés Matos and Nicolás Guillén as the prominent figures. On the other hand, the negritude movement in the Francophone Caribbean takes an ideological and political stance against French hegemony. Despite their different and often conflicting definitions of negritude, its founders, including the Martinican Aimé Césaire, sought to valorize the history and cultural traditions of the African diaspora. See Badiane, especially chapter 3 p.83-112, and Lewis.

Caribbean women writers. There, Boyce Davies uses the term "voicelessness" to describe the absence of women's perspectives on socio-cultural issues and their exclusion from literary critical dialogues in a male dominated narrative canon. In 1998, with the publication of *Common Threads*, Clementina Adams expanded the previous research of Boyce Davies and Elaine Savory to continental Latin America, particularly Uruguay, Ecuador, Colombia and Mexico. Adams provides a more comprehensive selection of Afro-Latin American and Spanish Caribbean writers, including lesser-known authors. She compiles selected synopsis and short excerpts of their writings with an emphasis on some themes that unified their voices. The 1990s truly represented the initial stage of an increasing interest in the literatures produced by Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean women writers.

In the last decade, the discussion has favored a more specialized approach compared to the general scope of the 1990s. Scholars such as Ian Smart, Dorothy Mosby, Claudette Williams and Shireen Lewis have each recognized specific issues at play in the field, particularly the intersection of gender, race and nation. These scholars offer a new reading of the concept of blackness as well as a revisionist analysis of the negritude and negrismo movements. For instance, in *Charcoal and Cinnamon* (2000), Claudette Williams questions the figure of *la mulata* as national symbol compared to the character of the black woman who is absent and marginalized. Williams also emphasizes a nuanced understanding of the negrismo movement by engaging with the social and political themes in the poems of the Afro-Cuban poet Nancy Morejón. Similarly, focusing on the French Caribbean, Shireen Lewis questions the gendered definition of the negritude movement by exemplifying the contributions of women writers and intellectuals,

particularly Paulette Nardal. Lastly, Ian Smart and Dorothy Mosby uncover the legacy of the Jamaicans who participated in the construction of the Panama canal and several national projects in Costa Rica. Both scholars look at the literatures produced by each successive generation of Costa Ricans of Jamaican and African descent such as Eulalia Bernard, Shirley Campbell Barr and Delia Woolery McDonald.

In both the fields of Afro-Latin American Literature and History, the absence of women has been explained as due to a lack of direct voices, whether it is by Doris Kadish in the French Caribbean context or by Jon Sensbach, among others, in the Spanish-speaking context. The latter reveals that: "individually and collectively, women have a tendency to disappear in this version of early Black Atlantic history. Because of the scarcity of direct testimony from black women, their experiences remain elusive at least through the early nineteenth century" (99). Because of this, contemporary Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean women writers are emplotting real lives to offer nuanced national histories that integrate the voices of black women and recognize their contributions. In Cuba, two fundamental texts, the poem "mujer negra" by Nancy Morejón (1982) and the testimonial *Reyita sencillamente* (1996) by María de Los Reyes Castilla Bueno with her daughter Daisy Rubiera Castilla, intend to give a gendered perspective of the slavery experience. These texts also serve as a contrast to two well known autobiographies from a man's perspective specifically *Autobiografía de un esclavo* (1937) by Juan Francisco Manzano edited by Domingo del Monte and *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1966) edited by Miguel Barnet[4]. The question of mediation appears in

[4] In both autobiographies, editors modulated the original voice through multiple revisions. In "La invisibilidad de Manzano", Elio B. Ruiz explains how the constant editing distorts the reality in the following words: "en muchos sentidos, *Autobiografía* fue editada, reescrita, francamente

Reyita sencillamente as Daisy Rubiera used a few interview questions as a point of departure and edited the text to avoid obscure passages and unnecessary repetition. Furthermore, Reyita self-censored herself to avoid shocking her daughter. In this case, the act of editing is also a rewriting of the character, of the real life represented, thus recovering a mediated history. Nonetheless, the objective in her text is to offer an alternative national history as she inscribes herself in the lineage of women of African descent who participated in the Cuban wars of independence and the revolution, and whose contributions are absent in the official records. Paula Sanmartín righlty affirms that the novel "constitutes the closest narrative we have of Black Cuban women's life from a protagonist with direct knowledge of the experience since the period of slavery" (115).

Prior to *Reyita Sencillamente* (1996), in the poem "Mujer negra", Nancy Morejón had rewritten the figure of the Black woman as an active participant in the construction of her nation by highlighting her economic, political and cultural contributions. The poem is told in the first person and Morejón aligns the biography of the black woman with major historical events of the Cuban nation, particularly the slave trade, life in the plantations, the wars of independence and the Cuban revolution. The poem starts with an emphasis on sensorial aspects: "todavía huelo la espuma del mar que me hicieron atravesar" and announces the middle passage experience. As the black woman reaches the Cuban soil, she is aware that she will never go back to the African continent and builds her life in Cuba. The poem narrates subtly the sexual abuses that she suffered through ellipsis. For

manipulada por aquellos que creían saber mejor que el autor lo que éste quería decir en tanto, esclavo, o debía decir en tanto hombre que merecía ser libre" [In many ways, *Autobiografia* was edited, rewritten and, frankly, manipulated by those who believed they know better what the author wanted to say as a slave or what he should say as a man who deserved to be free] (170).

instance, in the verse “bordé la casaca de su merced y un hijo macho le parí” Nancy Morejón shows how slaves were economic agents and their bodies were also subject to acts of violence. Furthermore, in the poem, the black woman adds that her son was denied a name. The use of contrast reveals the economic contribution by juxtaposing verbs that represent labor and opposing them with hunger “bajo su sol sembré, recolecté y las cosechas no comí”. The narrator rebels against the institution of slavery by becoming a slave maroon and later by participating in the wars of independence. First published in 1975, this poem remains a key text in Afro-Latin American literature as Nancy Morejón was among the first women to offer a gendered perspective of the history of slavery. In the realm of fiction, contemporary women writers are continuing to explore our engagement with the past. They are imagining those voices that were never recorded, representing a range of traumatic experiences and ways women slaves negotiated their own identities, loss of freedom and encounters with new cultural practices to survive and cultivate resilience in the new lands. The novels by Churrún Illescas, Chiriboga and Trouillot, for example, present the colonial era as a crucial period for the reconfiguration of national identities and the three authors use narrative strategies such as polyphony of voices, ekfrasis and ample description to represent real life experiences. On the other hand, Agnant and Santos Febres locate their main characters in the twentieth century, intellectual women who navigate multiple geographical frontiers, yet experience misunderstanding about their identities and isolation that can be traced back to their foremothers.

A clarification may be necessary before we continue. The terms “Afro-Latin American”, “Afro-Latino”, “Afro-Hispanic” and “Afro-Iberian” used frequently in the

field can be a source of confusion. In the introduction of *Afro-Latinoamérica* (2004), George Reid Andrews attempts to define the parameters of the category "Afro-Latin American" by taking into account how the category of race has evolved from 1800 to 2000 and by acknowledging the national and transnational movements of populations. He uses the term "Afro-Latin American" to refer to a country or regions in a country where 5% of the population is of African descent. Andrews also recognizes changes in the populations' cultural and racial makeup in countries like Argentina and Peru, which had an important African presence in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, Alex Borucki problematizes the term further by pointing out the categories that Africans used to define themselves and how these categories differed from the ones assigned to them. He states that: "to use the terms "Uruguayans" or "Afro-Uruguayans" for the period 1770-1850 is not only anachronistic but also misrepresents the diversity of subjects in this story by defining a teleological national horizon for them" (19). On her part, in *Chocolate and Corn Flour* (2012), Laura Lewis explains that scholarship on race in Mexico is based on a Eurocentric approach that erases the nuanced understanding of local communities. Lewis argues that there is a disconnection between words and definitions that intellectuals use and the way that the residents of San Nicolás Tolentina in the region of Guerrero (Mexico), understand their racial identities especially in acknowledging their indigenous heritages[5]. In this dissertation, the term "Afro-Latin American" is used to refer to women of African descent and in the colonial period, I mostly employ "African slaves and their descendants" to acknowledge the fluidity and complexity of racial categories in Latin America, and the French and Spanish Caribbean.

[5] For more information, see Lewis and Torres.

Theoretical Background on the Intersection of Race, Gender and Citizenship in Latin America

In her introduction to *Bodies that Matter*, Judith Butler makes a distinction between gender and sex, explaining that discourses on gender are not necessarily fixed nor the casual result of sex pertenance. Instead, gender should be studied as a constructed category influenced by cultural discourses. Butler stresses the importance of gender as a discourse that is usually tied to a national agenda. Drawing heavily on Butler's theories, Anne McClintock states that "all nations are gendered" (104) explaining how hegemonic national discourses are inseparable from gender differences. Indeed, McClintock argues that discourses on the nation are formulated within a specific gender perspective that excludes women. This relationship between gender and national discourses is discussed in depth by Nira Yuval-Davis who seeks to understand how notions of femininity and masculinity are expressed in nationalistic discourses. Yuval-Davis acknowledges that the meaning of nation has shifted over time, but for years gender relations were ignored and even perceived as irrelevant in debates about nationalisms and its theories. According to Yuval-Davis, the main pitfall of theorizing nationalisms is the importance given to participation in a political public sphere, thus excluding women who were often restricted to the private space. This dichotomy also presents women's participation in the public arena as an anomaly even though they have always been engaged in the process of nation formation and consolidation.Yuval-Davis aims to demonstrate that the concepts of gender and nation inform and construct each other. Despite their invisibility in nationalistic discourses, Yuval-Davis argues that women are at the center of discourses of nation

formation as biological reproducers, as guardians of collective memory and as producers of cultural narratives through education.

Yuval-Davis first critiques Ernest Renan, by focusing on his promotion of a homogenous vision of the nation through the myth of a common origin and a shared cultural heritage. She explains that these claims to sameness exclude heterogeneities and the diversity of cultural and ethnic experiences within a nation. She also dialogues with Benedict Anderson's argument that the development and consolidation of print-capitalism and languages played a crucial role in the origin of national consciousness. Yuval-Davis points out that Anderson failed to recognize gender constraints and how these public spheres were mostly available to men. Following a similar criticism, Sara Castro-Klarén explains that in Latin America, nations were also constructed as cultural artifacts. The Latin American context presents experiences that challenge Anderson's definition as certain minority groups did not have access to that printed culture. Castro-Klarén emphasizes the fact that nations in Latin American were racial and gendered constructs that granted citizenship to those who met the norms of literacy, whiteness and patriarchy.

Nancy Appelbaum, Anne MacPherson and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt also provide a perspective on the intersections of race and nation in Modern Latin America. Appelbaum, MacPherson and Rosemblatt recognize that they are indebted to the work of Benedict Anderson, but that in the Latin American context, race and gender were fundamental in the process of nation-formation. Like Castro-Klarén, they emphasize that race and nation were constantly reimagined and their meanings were revisited and shaped according to the historical context. Thus, after the Wars of Independence, the question of

race was ignored and even denied in the process of nation consolidation despite the noticeable racial boundaries in the colonial period. Appelbaum, MacPherson and Rosemblatt argue that in Latin America, national identities have been constructed in racial terms and definitions of race have been shaped by the process of nation building (2). They also clarify that their use of the term "race" does not reflect physical appearance but the scientific discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through a study of the history of Latin America, Appelbaum, MacPherson and Rosemblatt demonstrate how non-Europeans were excluded from high political and economic spheres and how race shaped their socioeconomic position in the nation. They also propose that discourses on *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* in the twentieth century challenge the construction of dominant national narratives.

Other scholars such as Chandra Tapalde Mohanty, Bell Hooks, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí and Molara Ogundipe-Leslie have drawn more attention to the dynamics of gender and race in feminist theories. The four scholars criticize feminist scholarship that fails to integrate a perspective on race and its underlying assumption that "third world women" are victims. These scholars question the notion in dominant feminist discourses that all women are oppressed. Bell Hooks explains that this conjecture erases the diversity of experiences where race and class play an important factor in determining gender roles. She also emphasizes that prior to the emergence of feminist discourses, black women developed an awareness of patriarchal politics and strategies for resistance from their lived experiences. Hence, Hooks denounces a condescending tone in earlier feminist theories given the lack of acknowledgement of black women's struggles. In a similar fashion, Chandra Tapalde Mohanty in "Under Western Eyes" analyzes the

production of an image of women from non-Western geographic areas as "a monolithic subject" (51). First Mohanty clarifies the fact that the dominant Western feminist discourse is not homogenous, but that there is an assumption that women in the so-called "third world" are victims and oppressed. Mohanty refutes this by stating that concepts of reproduction and sexual division of labor are often used without their specific local, historical and cultural contexts. This assumption constructs defined binaries (power and powerless) that place women in specific categories without taking into account their modes of resistance and diverse experiences.

By interrogating the gendered discourse on nation, the question of national history becomes central and prompts scholars like Castro Klarén to inquire who writes history and who is left out. This historical discourse serves to legitimize, define and shape the creation of newly founded nation-states and national identities. Jorge Klor de Alva also reaches a similar conclusion as he contests the application of the term "post-colonialism" in Latin America. He suggests that there was never a rupture between the Spanish rule and the ruling elite of the nineteenth century because it was mostly composed of descendants of Spanish colonizers. Klor de Alva argues that the ruling elite who won the wars of independence were never colonial subjects. To establish their authority in the newly independent countries, the ruling elite manipulated the historical discourse to present themselves as the legitimate heirs and thus erasing conflicts among indigenous groups. From these gender and postcolonial perspectives, it is understood that nations are gendered cultural constructions that serve to legitimize hegemonic powers while at the same distorting historical discourse.

Michel de Certeau and Marianne Hirsch both provide additional framework for better understanding how history is constructed like a (fictional) narrative. De Certeau focuses on the role of the historian as an author of a fictional discourse whereas Hirsch explains how traumatic events in the past can affect profoundly the future generations who did not experience them. In the "Historiographical Operation", Michel de Certeau proposes a theoretical framework to understand the intricacies of historiography and its practice. De Certeau indicates that our understanding of the past is always influenced by our cultural and historical baggage. He further explains that the interpretation of history has always been in the hands of a very small social elite that did not have to participate in the labor of the nation. This also suggests a skewed understanding of historical events as the elite might not necessarily consider socioeconomic tensions playing out in their societies. By problematizing who writes history, the intention of the historian and his *a priori* assumptions, De Certeau demonstrates that history is an interpretation of facts even though it has to follow a scientific methodology. De Certeau shows that the historian will have to develop his own set of methodological tools and models that he will use to interpret the historical documents. This interpretation will be influenced by his disciplinary approach, the narrative devices and the genre that the historian decides to use to revive the past. On the other hand, Marianne Hirsch focuses on the individual level and explores the transmission of historical events from one generation to another, specifically in the context of the Holocaust. Hirsch coins the term "postmemory" to describe the transgenerational transmission of traumatic events from a first generation to the second one who might not have lived the traumatic event.

The works of Saidiya Hartman and Kathryn Burns further explore the interpretative nature of historical archives, from their genesis to the perspectives of officials in charge. In *Lose your mother* (2007), Saidiya Hartman presents a personal memoir and critical reflection of her experiences in Ghana as a scholar and as part of the African diaspora. She addresses silences in historical documents through her experiences of researching her own genealogy, specifically the life of her great-grandmother, the last direct link to the period of slavery. Hartman explains that "the archive dictates what can be said about the past and the kinds of stories that can be told about the persons cataloged, embalmed, and sealed away in box files and folios"(17). She recognizes a tension between the function of the archive as a repository of the past that offers insight on lives and the veracity of records that can be challenged due to "the slipperiness and elusiveness of slavery's archive" (17). Therefore, the historian navigates highly mediated narratives and fills in the gaps, questions and uncertainties with his or her own understanding of the facts. On her part, in *Into the Archive (*2010), Kathryn Burns analyzes the role of notaries in the making of the archive by stating that: "writing and power were inextricably joined in their hands: they (and their assistants) had the power to put other people's words into official form. These men thus hold power over us as well: the power to shape our histories of the Latin American past" (xi). In Afro-Latin American studies, there is an added layer of complexity as some testimonies in legal documents were told under duress[6] and narrated through the scribe's interpretation of the facts. Burns proposes new questions to take into account when examining the archives including: "who had the power to make other people's needs and desires legally true?

[6] For more information please see *Afro-Latino Voices* (2009) by Kathryn McKnight and Leo Garofalo

What was silenced and what made salient? Just how did people get their versions into (or out of) the record?" (4). These interrogations allow new interpretations of the archive and its complex relation to interpretation, mediation, genre, writing, and to fiction itself.

The five novels that I examine in this dissertation navigate the boundaries between fiction and history as the authors feature characters whose lives are mentioned in historical archives about slavery in Latin America, the French and Spanish Caribbean. As the authors search for answers, they grapple with ways to recover silences in historical records turning to fiction to imagine and recreate unknown details. These novels are then constructed historical narratives that position themselves as expanded archives.

Summary of Chapters

The five authors studied are opening up a dialogue about a silenced chapter in their respective national histories, that is, the experience of slavery from a gendered perspective. My scholarship contributes a new dimension in the field of Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean literatures by analyzing how these authors challenge the limits of historical narratives in their representation of traumatic events lived by women slaves, events such as displacement, loss of social status, loss of freedom and sexual and physical violence. As they revisit well-known literary traditions and topos such as ekfrasis or madness, each author gives voice to women slaves and their descendants, creating fictionalized slave narratives in continental Latin American and Afro-Caribbean literatures written in Spanish and French. Also, in their novels, Marie-Célie Agnant and Mayra Santos-Febres take a closer look at the ways museums and academic circles

represent the history of slavery and reflect on its weight in contemporary societies. This dissertation also brings a needed comparative and interdisciplinary approach to scholarship on the experience of slavery in the Francophone and Hispanophone contexts in the Caribbean, an area often defined according to linguistic borders. Moreover, there is a visibility difference in Afro-Latin American literatures between those who write from continental Latin America in comparison to the Caribbean.

In the first chapter, using trauma theories by Cathy Caruth, I argue that in *Jonatás y Manuela*, Luz Argentina Chiriboga recreates a historical archive by leaning into moments of silence to first portray the traumatic experience of slavery and then to reveal acts of agency of women slaves through shifts of perspective from the third-person omniscient narrator. I analyze moments of exterior and interior silences in the novel to show how Chiriboga uses fiction to reimagine true, yet fictionalized lives and proposes an alternative Ecuadorian national history. In the second chapter, using theories by Elizabeth Jelin and Pierre Nora, I look at the role of art in *Malambo* (2001) through the main character Tomasón, whose paintings redefine power dynamics with his slave master, transmit cultural knowledge about African traditions, and inspire others who are struggling with the limits of their social status and their desire to become free. I also show how Tomasón's paintings open a space to talk about the guilt of those who participated in the slave trade and provide healing in processing trauma. As Tomasón creates content as an artist, I propose that Charún-Illescas establishes her novel as *a lieu de mémoire* for contemporary readers by putting forward the history of an actual neighborhood in Lima and the agency of its residents. In the third chapter, I turn toward theories on third-generation and testimony to study the transmission of intergenerational

trauma in *Rosalie l'infâme* (2003) and *le livre d'Emma* (2001), whose main characters attempt to understand their identities as granddaughters whose foremothers killed children to protect them from the chains of slavery. I also examine silences in these texts as Emma and Lisette piece together their family histories, a quest that mirrors a reluctance in the French Caribbean and in France to face the slave past. In the fourth chapter, I use new museum theories to shed light on the problematics of memorializing slavery in *Fe in disfraz,* particularly via the role of Martín Tirado, a fictional historian who puts together the narrative. I also show how the character Fe Verdejo embodies a direct link between the history of slavery and its legacy in the present through her experiences of social exclusion, intergenerational trauma, and the inclusion in the exhibition of a dress that once belonged to a former slave in Brazil. In the conclusion, I discuss how I plan to expand this study to other regions of Latin America for my book project by including additional authors from other countries like Uruguay and Mexico.

Chapter One

Reading the Archive: Uncovering Gendered Experiences of Slavery in *Jonatás y Manuela* by Luz Argentina Chiriboga

In the introduction of the critical anthology *Narradoras ecuatorianas de hoy* (2000), Gloria da Cunha-Giabbai and Adelaida López de Martínez evaluate attentively the challenges faced by contemporary Ecuadorian women writers. The most salient obstacles that emerge from the fourteen interviews of new and established writers are access to publishing houses and invisibility in the Latin American literary canon. Da Cunha- Giabbia observes that contemporary Ecuadorian women writers are not widely:

> El grueso de la crítica de las obras de las escritoras ecuatorianas descansa, lamentablemente, sobre cortas reseñas en periódicos locales o nacionales, hechas con buenas intenciones, pero no por críticos especializados capaces de aquilatar al máximo el valor de tal producción y en un contexto mayor, lo cual va en detrimento de la calidad, profundidad y novedad de la misma. (15)
>
> The main literary criticism regarding Ecuadorian women writers consists, unfortunately, of short reviews in local or national newspapers. These articles are written with good intentions, but not by specialized scholars able to assess fully the value of such works and place them in a larger context, thus damaging their value, depth and originality. (my translation[7])

Not only does the venue of these critical articles reduce the number of readers to a local public, but it also precludes a wider dialogue beyond national boundaries. The limited

[7] All English translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

scholarship on contemporary Ecuadorian women writers is also the result of a certain isolation of Ecuadorian literature at large in the context of Latin American studies. Furthermore, Gloria da Cunha Giabbai calls attention to other hurdles these writers face, such as the resistance of publishing houses, political turmoil and insufficient access to economic resources. As a result, there is an increasing number of unpublished works by Ecuadorian women writers compared to their male counterparts.

In her interview with both editors, the Afro-Ecuadorian writer Luz Argentina Chiriboga echoes their arguments and criticizes the lack of cultural policies that would encourage the production of literary works inside and outside the national territory. Born in 1940, Luz Argentina Chiriboga grew up in Esmeraldas, known for its large Afro-Ecuadorian population, then moved to the capital Quito to pursue her studies. Even though Chiriboga has a scientific background in Biology and Ecology, literature has always been an integral part of her life as an avid reader and prolific writer. Despite her success as a writer, few scholars are currently studying her texts that encompass a wide range of genres, from children's books to poetry and short stories. Through her writings, Luz Argentina Chiriboga has carved a new discursive space in the emerging field of Afro-Ecuadorian literature by addressing the intersections of race and gender. Her first two novels *Bajo la piel de los tambores* (1991) and *Jonátas y Manuela* (1994) as well as her work as an activist have offered a new perspective to the two predominantly male voices of Afro-Ecuadorian literature, Adalberto Ortiz and Nelson Estupiñán Bass. Chiriboga revisits cultural expectations imposed on Afro-Ecuadorian women in their own communities and questions their invisibility in the larger national context. She is particularly invested in showing how Afro-Ecuadorians fought during the wars of

independence (1810-1825) along with Simón Bolívar. Her second novel *Jonatás y Manuela* (1994) is based on historical accounts found in the archives about Manuela Sáenz, the mistress of Simón Bolívar, and their references to Jonatás, a slave who grew up with her and whom she considered to be a confidant. Chiriboga imagines the lives of Jonatás' ancestors and provides a fictionalized account of the history of slavery in Ecuador from a gendered and racial perspective.

In this chapter, using definitions and theories on the archive and trauma by Carolyn Steedman and Cathy Caruth, I propose that Chiriboga uses the historical archive to emplot fictionalized lives of three generations of Afro-Ecuadorians women as a means to create new textual spaces in the larger dominant narrative of national identities. In doing so, this return to the archives serves to recover unheard voices that reveal the agency and participation of people of African descent during the process of nation-building. Furthermore, Chiriboga suggests that silences in historical archives are open to interpretation and can provide insightful information about the processes of traumatic experiences during the colonial period. By focusing on a multigenerational family, Chiriboga creates a parallel between family and national histories in order to expand the traditional definition of Ecuadorian identity that overlooks African heritages. Hence, as silences are open to interpretation in the literary texts, Chiriboga reads the historical archive by listening to them: whose voices are absent? Which stories are not told? How does the diversity of experiences of slavery inform our understanding of survival strategies? In my analysis, I will pay close attention to the meaning of these recurrent silences as a literary strategy to reflect on the articulation of subjectivities and, beyond

the novel, as an interrogation about the absence of this history in wider conversations about national identities.

Summary of the Novel and Secondary criticism

Jonatás y Manuela is set during a period of heightened tensions when there was an increasing number of revolts and poisoning episodes in enslaved communities between the last decades of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Told by a third person omniscient narrator, the novel is composed of fourteen chapters and can be divided into two main parts. The first part focuses on the life of Ba-Lunda also known as Rosa Jumandi, and the second one follows the life of her granddaughter Nasakó Zansi or Jonatás, whom she never met[8]. The novel starts *in medias res* with a life and death battle, as Ba-Lunda has gotten sick in the plague epidemic and is receiving care from a traditional healer. The narrative goes back and forth between her present life as a slave and her memories of her native land as a mother and wife, marked by her intuition that she will die as a slave. After the capture, there is a juxtaposition of images of a frightened Ba-Lunda during the middle passage and the desperate screams of her husband looking for his family. The description of the middle passage traces slave routes from the African continent to Cádiz, Cartagena and the final destination in Ecuador.

Chapters four and five describe Ba-Lunda's first days as a slave, her determination to gain back her freedom and how the plantation overseer sexually assaults her. Using her knowledge of herbal properties, Ba-Lunda succeeds in poisoning the

[8] Each woman has two names, their original African name and the one given after their capture.

overseer and the priest. With other slaves, she makes her first attempt to escape the plantation which is abruptly aborted and results in severe punishments. Chapter 6 narrates daily life in the plantations and the second attempt to gain freedom. During a celebration, several slaves decided to drink an empoisoned beverage. When the owners realize what is happening, a commotion follows and Ba-Lunda dies of a heart attack.

Chapters seven and eight summarize the life of Ba-Lunda's daughter Nasakó, also known as Juana Carabalí, who makes a living selling baked goods in the town and saves money to buy her freedom. After her marriage and the early death of three children, Nasakó has her last child Nasakó-Zansi and gives her part of her name as as a tribute to her mother. Both Nasakó and her daughter are later sold to different plantations and only reunite towards the end of the novel by pure coincidence. The last part narrates the life story of Nasakó- Zansi or Jonatás[9]. She becomes a companion to the young Manuela Saénz[10], who teaches her how to write and read. These final chapters describe their friendship, the beginning of their political consciousness and their involvement in the wars of independence by spying and freeing slaves in the middle of the night. The novel has an open ending as Manuela invites Jonatás to join the ranks of the army.

Maria Zielina, Rosemary Geisdorfer Feal, and Lesley Feracho, among other scholars, have studied *Jonatás y Manuela* through the lens of postcolonial and gender theories. As the article title indicates, in "*Jonátas y Manuela*: la historia de una amistad transnacional y étnica", Zielina focuses on the friendship of Jonátas and Manuela. She studies how Chiriboga underscores the participation of two marginalized women, due to

[9] Nasakó wanted her daughter to have an African name that will assert her place in the family tree as the granddaughter of Ba-Lunda and Jabí. She gives her part of her name Nasakó and adds Zansi as a middle name. Later, the slave master don Simón renames her Jonatás.

[10] Manuela Saénz becomes later Simón Bolívar's partner.

their social status and gender, in the wars of independence. Zielina also dialogues with existing historical texts written about Simón Bolívar and gives examples where Manuela Sáenz was portrayed in a single role: the lover. She demonstrates how Chiriboga represents slavery and the nineteenth century from a gendered perspective while following well-known conventions of the antislavery novel. Feal describes the main themes and the importance of this novel in Latin American literature in the introduction of her English translation of the first five chapters. Feal explains how Chiriboga's depictions of the main characters, Ba-Lunda, Jonátas and Manuela Sáenz contrast with the racial images of la mulata and black women in the negrismo poetic movement and other Latin American literary canonical works. Feal also highlights the originality of the novel as the lives of the female slaves and their descendants are at the forefront of the action instead of a mere background, declaring: "Luz Argentina Chiriboga accomplishes what no Afro-Hispanic author has done to date. *Jonatás y Manuela* provides a gynocentric vision of the African diasporic experience, and it establishes that Jonatás merits attention as a historical and literary figure, as do the generations of her foremothers" (25). This originality is reiterated in later critical articles as Lesley Feracho, Lancelot Cowie and Michel Handelsman confirm and expand on the arguments stated by previous scholars. Feracho compares Chiriboga's emphasis on marginalized voices to the literary works of the Cuban writer Nancy Morejón and the Guadeloupean novelist Maryse Condé. In her article, Feracho reflects upon the importance of oral tradition and rhetoric in *Jonatás y Manuela* as a form to negotiate concepts of national identity, to transmit knowledge from one generation to another and to create a sense of community in the new country. Feracho also interprets communal prayers and songs that

appear throughout the novel and how women slaves use them to convey messages of solidarity, strength and resilience. In another critical work "Uprising Textualities of the Americas", Feracho studies how the novel displaces the beginnings of the wars of independence in Ecuador from well-known historical figures to "examples of resistance represented by the enslaved female family members of Sáenz's slave and later her companion Jonatás" (136). In "Esclavitud y resistencia de la mujer negra en Jonátas y Manuela", Lancelot compares Chiriboga's reconstitution of historical facts to other literary texts that speak directly about the experience of slavery such as *Francisco* (1880) by Anselmo Suárez y Romero. Lastly, in "*Jonatás y Manuela*: lo afroecuatoriano como discurso alternativo de lo nacional y lo andino", Michel Handelsman examines how the dominant Ecuadorian discourse on the nation has completely overlooked the contributions of African slaves in favor of the indigenous heritage. He shows how Chiriboga attests in her novel that Ecuador is also a part of an African diaspora by reevaluating the foundations of national identity.

Making Sense of Silences: Navigating the Said and Unsaid

> "Because their stories have been either untold or mistold, a new narrative of black women's history must revise both the silences and the damaging stereotypes that have dictated how black women have emerged in historiography."(2)
> Paula Sanmartín. *Black Women as Custodians of History* (2014)

In her study of literature produced by African-American and Afro-Cuban women writers, Paula Sanmartín analyzes how authors seek to offer an alternative narrative of past portrayals of black women: "these writers have authorized themselves to contest dominant discourses and challenge a historical narrative in which the role of black

women has been overlooked or turned into a myth" (9). By rectifying these conceptions, these authors aim to promote a multicultural image of the nation and produce stories that expand definitions of traditional national identities. Similarly, the publication of *Jonatás y Manuela* addresses the fact that there are little to none gendered and racial first-accounts narratives set in colonial Ecuador. By imagining the daily life of African slaves, this novel attempts to reinsert these forgotten voices and to reflect on silences in the so-called official history. Chiriboga asserts in interviews that her novel is purely fictitious and that she is inviting a dialogue about the African presence in Ecuador and the legacy of slavery, a topic that is rarely discussed. Therefore, Chiriboga also grapples with the following questions: where can we find reliable sources about these experiences? How can one write about them in a manner that is conducive to a conversation that challenges established perceptions of national identities? In Ecuador, as in other parts of Latin America, during the colonial period, slaves did not have a discursive space and there are scarce visible physical traces, such as monuments or ruins, of their presence. Chiriboga revisits the archives in search of answers about the history of African slaves and their descendants in an attempt to offer a reconstruction of their lives.

In "The Space of Memory", the historian Carolyn Steedman defines an archive "as a name for the many places in which the past (which does not now exist, but which once did actually happen; which cannot be retrieved, but which may be represented) has deposited some traces and fragments, usually in written form" (67). This characterization argues the interpretative nature of past events and the process of filling in the gaps of what is no longer there yet did happen. In other words, how can one articulate and recreate events out of sparse clues from the past? Furthermore, Steedman adds that "to

enter that place where the past lies, where ink on parchment can be made to speak, remains still the social historian's dream, of bringing to life those who do not for the main part exist, not even between the lines of state papers and legal documents, who are not really present" (69). Chiriboga leans into that nebulous zone, listening and voicing silences about the separation of families, the sexual assaults inside the slave ships and the plantations, and imagines lives that have not been recorded in official historical narratives. As the author incorporates references to the wars of independence, the figure of Simón Bolívar and Manuela Sáenz, the lines between fiction and history are often indistinguishable. In doing so, the lives of Jonatás and her foremothers are inserted in nineteenth century Latin-American history and the novel can be read as an archive of its own. Instead of providing numbers, the author puts names, faces and voices to characters that *might* have existed, thus reconstituting possible stories that were not written down. In the introduction of *Biography and the Black Atlantic* (2013), Lisa A. Lindsay and John Wood Sweet look at how recent scholars in history are privileging biographies, whether real or fictionalized, as a source of information of lived experiences. They astutely point out that "by attaching names and faces to broad processes such as slaving, enslavement, identity formation, empire-building, migration and emancipation, biography can illuminate the meanings of these large, impersonal forces for individuals" (2). Indeed, Chiriboga goes beyond the process of illustrating the history of slavery in Ecuador and highlights differences in experiences of slavery and its trauma across three generations of women. Caruth's theory on trauma provides an invaluable framework to study how Chiriboga depicts responses to multiple traumatic events in the novel.

In *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena" (92). In this definition, Caruth notes a delay between processing the violent act in the moment it happened and reliving it later in forms that are not visible to the naked eye. Caruth adds that "trauma is spoken in a language that is always somehow literary: a language that defies, even as it claims, our understanding" (5). The language of trauma has to portray the violent nature of the act, show the emotional distress, transmit the event and at the same time reconcile with the impossibility of finding the exact words. This literary language will require the reader or listener to be fully engaged in the process of bearing witness to the trauma and be attuned to the different voices of trauma. Lastly, Caruth brings up the writing process of a traumatic experience as "the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language" (5). In *Jonatás y Manuela*, silence is paradoxically the voice of trauma and the perspective of the omniscient narrator informs the articulation of an exterior silence and an interior silence. In the descriptions of the capture and the middle passage, an interior silence occurs when the reader loses access to the inner thoughts of characters. This absence occurs when characters are processing the shock of the capture, changes of social status, loss of the familiar and loss of humanity in the eyes of the slave owner. In subsequent chapters related to daily life in the plantations, an exterior silence occurs when the omniscient narrator shifts the narrative perspective to focus on the voice of an isolated character.

The first life story describes Ba-Lunda as an African woman (la Africana), a devoted mother and wife. Her biography starts in her native homeland and ends in Ecuador, covering her adult life in both geographical locations. It also blends personal memories and key moments of the trade such as the capture, the middle passage, the slave auction and life in the new territory. From the beginning, the narrative dismantles concepts of a safe home as the danger of being captured and sold as a slave already looms in Ba-Lunda's native land. There is a contrast between her home, which functions as a peaceful haven, and the world beyond the threshold of her doorstep where rumors about enslavement circulate. By doing so, Chiriboga writes against the notion of Africa itself as a lost paradise or a mythic idealized home before the experience of slavery. In *Black Women Writing and Identity* (1994), Carol Davies Boyce states that in narratives written by black women "the mystified notions of home and family are removed from their romantic, idealized moorings, to speak of pain, movement, difficulty, learning and love in complex ways" (21). In *Jonatás y Manuela,* the first chapters of the novel emphasize Ba-Lunda's intuition that she would die as a slave. Her distress is expressed in her nightmares where a fish appears repeatedly as a metaphor of a slave ship: "desde el fondo del río, había surgido un pez que, abriendo sus fauces, la absorbió y, en la barriga del animal hizo un largo viaje que le fue imposible regresar; desterrada, se veía llorando inconsolable" (13) [From the depth of the river, a fish had emerged that, opening its jaw, absorbed her and in the belly of this animal, she undertook a long trip from where it was impossible to return; exiled, she saw herself crying, inconsolable]. Over time, other features are added and Ba- Lunda dreams that "cada día aumentaba otra cualidad al animal, ahora tenía la figura de un hombre" (13) [every day, the animal had another

quality, now it had the form of a man]. These nightmares reveal her mental anguish about losing her life as a free woman and everything she knows. For Ba-Lunda, the traumatic experience of the slave trade starts before her capture and weighs on her daily life as she keeps her fears to herself.

After the capture, there is very little dialogue in the chapters describing the middle passage. An interior silence is created when the reader cannot access Ba-Lunda's thoughts during the narration as she is processing feelings such as helplessness and shock of being captured. In the novel, interior silence appears as a narrative device to show that characters are unable to vocalize a traumatic experience as it unfolds. There are also nuances in that interior silence resulting from authority figures who are silencing slaves to assert their power. During the middle passage, the perspective of the omniscient narrator moves from the silence in the slave ship to repeated screams in the community left behind to convey the reaction of families abruptly separated. For instance, when Ba-Lunda's husband looks for his family, there is an array of sounds from shouts to echoes: "corrió por la playa gritando su nombre. La contestación fue un eco lejano" (18) [he ran through the beach screaming her name. The answer was a distant echo]. In this instance, not only Ba-Lunda cannot hear him as she is in the slave ship, but also Jabí's scream stays unresolved and does not get an answer that he is looking for, slowly diminishing into an echo. He is alone and the only answer is his own. This interior silence also confirms the finality of her departure, the impossibility of knowing where she is going and what she will become. The omniscient narrator also reviews emotional responses in other communities to show the wider impact of the capture: "De las comarcas cercanas, le llegaron gritos y llantos de parientes de los que también habían sido cogidos" (18)

[From neighboring regions, he could hear screams and sobbing of the relatives of those who have been captured]. These reactions indicate how the trauma of the capture affected both sides and it translates into various emotional responses. Beyond the novel, Chiriboga is vocalizing the impact of the slave trade at the individual, community and regional levels.

Lastly it is in the interior silence that nostalgia is expressed, especially the loss of simple pleasures, comforting routines and freedom. In her inner thoughts, Ba-Lunda revisits multiple relationships and mourns that loss: "Ba-Lunda añoraba su almohadón de plumas, sus paseos con Jabí por las orillas, sus idas al río por las mañanas, las visitas a su madre, las conversaciones con sus amigas y el olor de los nardos. Sobre todo, extrañó algo que había gozado sin sentirlo: la libertad" (22) [Ba-Lunda missed her feather pillow, her walks with Jabí by the shore, her outings to the river in the morning, the visits to her mother, the conversations with her friends and the smell of tuberoses. Above everything, she missed something she had enjoyed without realizing it: freedom]. As she relives her past daily routines as a free woman, Ba-Lunda asserts her multiple identities, while as a slave, she is denied her individuality.

In the chapters relating the middle passage, the reader also has to stay fully engaged to note nuances in the interior silence from the inability to vocalize trauma to others as a result of power dynamics. There is a silence imposed by authority figures to prevent rebellions on slave ship. For instance, when Ba-Lunda attempted to scream, she is threatened and sees others brutally reprimanded for outbursts. There is another silence given the language barrier among the slaves, which adds a dimension of isolation to the pain and the inability to communicate in one's native tongue. Lastly, there are references

to the indescribable in the slave ship such as smells: “el aire apesta a cosas descompuestas” (21) [the air smelled of putrefied things]. The lack of words and allusions to decomposition imply the number of sicknesses and deaths in the slave ships. The use of “cosas” could also make a reference to the bodily fluids that the author prefers not to name. There is also a suggestion that experiences in slave ships cannot be fully recovered and understood due to the lack of information and testimonies. Furthermore, these nuances in interior silence in the text, show that the loss of dignity and humanity started in the slave ships.

In the chapters narrating life in the plantations, the interior silence changes to an exterior silence when the omniscient narrator shifts the narrative perspective to the voice of a slave. With that strategy, the author creates a fictionalized first-voice testimony that contrast with the lack of direct voices in historical archives. In these moments, the reader is able to see that in their inner thoughts, a character is asserting his or her individuality outside of their social status. For instance, the omniscient narrator moves the focus from Ba-Lunda to highlight another character who was verbally silent:

> la solista se frotó los ojos para reavivar el rostro de sus padres. Largo rato estuvo mirando el cielo, sin sentir el frío. De las extramuros de la noche afloró el deseo de ver a su hija y decirle cuánto aún la quería, repetirle que se cuidara mucho porque seguían trayendo gente para trabajar en los cañaverales. Pero para llegar a ella, debería matar, cruzar pantanos, enfrentar perros y guardianes, caminar largos trechos espinosos. Al pensarlo, se sintió impotente, jamás vería a sus familiares. Entonces un

> solo propósito, sencillo y firme, se incorporó en ella: huir. Tenían razón sus amigos, la única solución era el escape. (10)
>
> The solist rubbed her eyes to revive the face of her parents. For a while, she was looking at the sky, without feeling the cold. From the outskirts of the night, the desire to see her daughter surfaced. She longed to tell her that she loved her and remind her to take care of herself as they were still bringing people to work in the fields. But to reach her, she would have to kill, cross swamps, face dogs and guardians, walk long and thorny distances. As she thought about it, she felt helpless, she would never see her family. Then she had one single goal, simple and determined: to escape. Her friends were right, the only solution was to escape.

In this moment, the exterior silence is achieved when others like the plantation overseer perceive her as silent while internally, this quiet moment is an engaging process to reconnect with the past and acknowledge her identity outside the institution of slavery. The anguish and pain of separated families are predominant in this moment of remembrance as well as an awareness of the different hurdles that maroon slaves face. Yet, the juxtaposition of the feeling of helplessness with determination challenges the concept of powerless women slaves. Her own thoughts are a space of transformation as she cultivates a self-awareness and agency to become a maroon slave. There is a shift from remembrance of her native land and family members to a mode of powerful mental change and a declaration of resistance.

The shift of perspective occurs again in the middle of a religious ceremony to acknowledge the preservation of one's culture and to counteract a new authority. When a

priest comes to baptize all the slaves, one character, Mina, stands out and makes a reference to African gods in her maternal language:

> El jesuita explicó el caso de un muerto que vivía, se llamaba Jesucristo, lo llamaban también Jesús o simplemente Cristo, y él era su representante en la hacienda. Les pidió que siguieran el canto que él entonaba. Mina levantó la voz en su dialecto y siguió una cadena de alabanzas a Cristo, Obatalá, Ogún, Changó, Yemayá, Oddán y Ochún. (36)
>
> The Jesuit explained the story of a dead man who lived, whose name was Jesus Christ, also referred to as Jesus or simply Christ. He was his representative in this estate. He asked them to sing along with him. Mina raised her voice in her dialect and followed with a series of praises to Christ, Obatalá, Ogún, Changó, Yemayá, Oddán and Ochún.

The religious discourse in the plantation is used to grant authority to the priest. Yet Mina uses a different voice intonation to assert her different religious beliefs in her native tongue and challenges the denial of her personal customs. The gods[11] she invokes are associated with prayers for strength, resistance, transformation and protection. Similarly, in another ceremony, the exterior silence exemplifies a tension between a religious discourse based on love and the social status of a slave denied of humanity: "el sacerdote, al comienzo del sermón, recordó a los esclavos que debían servirle con amor porque así lo había dispuesto el Todo-poderoso; en recompensa, después de la muerte, irían al paraíso. Ba-Lunda estimaba que aquel dios no le convenía, pues había decidido hacerla esclava, separarla de Jabí y desarraigarla de su África (42) [at the beginning of the

[11] For additional information about Yoruba religion, see Jacob K. Olupona and Terry Rey.

sermon, the priest reminded slaves that they needed to serve him with love because that is how the almighty had intended; as a reward, they would go to paradise after death. Ba-Lunda thought that god didn't suit her, since he had decided to make her a slave, separate her from Jabí and exile her from her Africa]. In this moment, the priest cannot perceive Ba-Lunda's inner thoughts and her true feelings about his message. Her silence can be interpreted as obedience whereas internally she is questioning his lecture, giving specific examples that contradict the core of his religious discourse.

This contrast between interior and exterior silences reinforces the reading of the novel as a recreated archive that speaks against the historical erasure. Chiriboga uses fiction as a space that imagine voices that do not appear in historical narratives and shows the complexities of the slavery experience. The deployment of shifts in the third person omniscient narrator creates a space where characters can articulate their inner thoughts in their maternal tongues by stating "en su dialecto" (36) [in her dialect]. In these moments, they also reconnect with who they were before the capture and reiterate their identities outside of their social status as slave. There is a constant negotiation between previous identities as free women and the way they are perceived as slaves without access to basic rights. This restorative aspect of the exterior silence is a decisive catalyst to become involved in acts of resistance in the plantation and plan flights.

For Ba-Lunda, it is in this exterior silence that she tries to make sense of the sexual assault by the plantation overseer in front of her daughter Nasakó. Right after the act, he changes her name to Rosa Jumandi and from that day others do not use her original name to refer to her. In moments of silence, she is aware that the new name denies the way she sees herself: "llamarse Rosa Jumandi sería dejar de ser ella, no se

acostumbraría, sería como si la hubieran cambiado por dentro y por fuera" (34) [to be named Rosa Jumandi would be to stop being her, she would not get used to it, it would be as if they had changed her from inside and outside]. From there, the narrative alternates between the two names where her original one is tied to her involvement in acts of agency and the assigned one dissimulates her true motive and presents her adaptation in the new country. At the same time, there is an absence of explicit descriptions of violence which suggests the difficulty to truthfully represent life on the plantations. In this way, with this form of silence, Chirobaga implies that the unsaid in the novel covers up horrors of the past that are too painful and too difficult to face.

Breaking Silences: Engaging with Historical Amnesia

> "Postslavery literature more self-consciously argues that amnesia caused by slavery has yet to be answered by authors respective national cultures and even by their own attempts to resurrect slavery's enigmatic past. These texts are haunted by their own shortcomings in attempting recovery of repressed histories and in finding meaning in such failures" (3).
> George Handley, *Postslavery Literature* (2000)

In his analysis of the central role of genealogy in postslavery texts, George Handley uses the term "amnesia" to refer to the lack of acknowledgement of the history of slavery, its trauma and a reluctance to revisit this period. This silence permeates the texts themselves through concealed origins or a struggle with racial identities. He elaborates that "genealogy enables these writers to point to the miscegenated roots of their nations and thereby expose the unnatural marriage between slave owning and nationalism" (16). This tension speaks directly to those who are left out of national

narratives and how they fit in official histories. In *Jonatás y Manuela*, the use of genealogy serves to identify broken family ties, the diversity of experiences of slavery and silences about those who participated in the trade and in the army. Whereas the first biography of Ba-Lunda emphasized her acts of resistance, the second life story of her daughter Nasakó is very brief and summarized in a few pages. It is said that after her mother's death, she was sold to another plantation and never looked back to her past "allí creció sin preocuparse del pasado ni de lo que le vendría con el futuro" (69) [there, she grew up without worrying about the past nor what would happen to her in the future]. Towards the end of the novel, Nasakó runs into her daughter Jonatás by pure coincidence at the market. After the initial joy, Jonatás discovers that her mother tracks and arrests fugitive slaves: "Jonatás vio entonces a su madre. Le fue imposible comprender la razón para que ella se hubiera unido a un esclavista. ¡Qué malvado hechizo había cambiado así a Juana!" (163) [Then Jonatás saw her mother. It was impossible for her to understand the reasons why she had joined a slave trader. Which wicked spell had changed Juana that way?]. Unlike her mother and daughter, Nasakó pursued a different path that ensured economic stability. On one level, her personal choices speak directly to the ways in which social identity changes from one generation to another and the stratification among African-descent communities during the colonial period and in the nineteenth century. On another, the novel reveals different forces that influenced those choices in order to navigate the slavery system and as a mode of survival.

In Nasakó's biography, there are more silences than answers about the effects of significant traumatic experiences on her outlook on her daily life or how these might have shaped her choices. These events include being taken away and sold into slavery as a

child, the abrupt separation from her father, witnessing her mother's sexual assault and later, as a married woman, losing three children to various illnesses. In each instance, Nasakó vocalized her feelings through screams followed by a lack of words, as repeated behavior. Her interior silence hides the emotional impact of each trauma and it is heightened by the fact that she never talks about it to anyone. In "Trauma, Absence, Loss", Dominick LaCapra makes a distinction between two forms of responding and remembering trauma with the terms "acting-out and "working-through". In acting out, the past is repeatedly relived and the person who experienced the trauma is unable to move forward: " the past is performatively regenerated or relived as if it were fully present rather than represented in memory and inscription and it hauntingly returns as the repressed" (716). This repetition often appears as nightmares and flashbacks and with acting out, the traumatic experience of the past is always relived in the present. The process of acting out is related to working through, where trauma is acknowledged and several steps are taken to untangle its symptoms, understand the way(s) it is manifested and move towards the future. LaCapra explains that with working through "one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recognize something as having happened to one (or one's people) back then that is related to, but not identical with, here and now" (713). Nonetheless, he also acknowledges its complexity as the process requires frequently revisiting the trauma and problems that will change over time and acquire new nuances or different ways to approach them: "working through may at best enable some distance or critical perspective that is acquired with extreme difficulty and not achieved once and for all" (717).

For Nasakó, silencing the emotional impact of these traumatic experiences is her way of working through her trauma by briefly expressing it through her screams then focusing on the present and the future. She is in a transitional space between planning the future and delaying the labor to work through trauma because within slavery, she does not have a space to talk about its emotional impact and long-lasting effects. The novel highlights this lack of space through the contrast of her life as a child and as an adult after a traumatic event. For instance, after the middle passage and after witnessing the sexual assault of her mother, the third person omniscient narrator focuses on Nasakó's moments of play in her childhood. Games become an escape from dealing with the emotional trauma. Her mother Ba-Lunda also never asks her questions related to her feelings after each emotional trauma. In regards to the separation from her father, Ba-Lunda keeps his memory alive and alludes to a possible reunion: "le dijo lo de siempre: su papa Jabí estaba vivo y algún día vendría por ellas para regresar a su tierra" (33) [she told her the same thing as always: her father Jabí was alive and one day he would come for her so that they could return to their land]. By maintaining this hope, Ba-Lunda does not give her daughter an opportunity to express her feelings about the separation or the experience of the middle passage. This improbable return is Ba-Lunda's way of dealing with that separation, but her daughter processes trauma differently by staying grounded in the present and silencing her emotions. When she becomes a mother, Nasakó never reveals to Jonatás her experiences related to the trauma of the middle passage as her way of moving forward. In his work, LaCapra perceives mourning as an integral part of working through: "mourning brings the possibility of engaging trauma and achieving a

reinvestment in, or recathexis of, life that allows one to begin again" (713). The reader does not see Nasakó grieving or mourning, always focusing on a better future.

A common thread in each life stage of Nasakó is her aspiration to become free one day: "no obstante, pensaba que, cuando fuera grande, saldría libre de esa plantación" (70) [however, she thought that, when she grew up, she would leave the plantation as a free woman]. There is also an emphasis on her business skills and her ability to generate revenue by selling homemade food in front of churches. With her savings, she plans on buying her freedom and her daughter's and this is her main motivation to become successful. Upon the death of the plantation owner, Nasakó attempts to negotiate her fate by putting forward her good services: "se acercó al amo por entre el tumulto y le preguntó si ella que había servido con obediencia en la hacienda y tenía una hija, también debería marchar" (75) [in the midst of the chaos, she approached the plantation owner and asked him if she had to leave as well given the fact that she had been obedient and had a daughter]. Nasakó emphasizes her work ethic, her responsibility as a mother and the fact that she had not challenged the established authority. In doing so, she hopes that her reward will be freedom or an empathetic gesture which she does not receive. By presenting herself as a mother, she is also putting forward her humanity, shattering her social status as a slave in favor of her caretaker role, revealing the strong bond that she has with her daughter. By denying her request, the plantation overseer only perceives Nasakó as a slave erasing other layers of her identities. It is also that rejection that prompts Nasakó to escape and settle in the city of Ibarra, making a name for herself in food catering.

Her involvement in the capture of runaway slaves begins after her marriage with her second husband who is a slave trader. When she first learned about his occupation, Nasakó remarked his African ancestry and her astonishment: “usted parece tener una madre negra” (79) [you seem to have a black mother]. To which he responded “sí, pero mi papa era blanco” (79) [yes but my father was white]. This interaction reveals a contradiction between racial heritages and profession as her second husband favors his European identity to justify his involvement in the slave trade. At the same time, this exchange calls our attention to the fluidity in the understanding of racial categories in colonial Ecuador. Nasakó doesn’t challenge his actions of arresting people who look like her and his mother. Towards the end of the novel when she reappears, a mix of emotions is used to describe her with a shift in the perspective of the narrator. First, the third person omniscient narrator states: “sentía el placer de los que solo aman el dinero” (163) [she experienced the pleasure of those who only love money], then from Nasakó’s point of view “a veces yo me reprochaba mi conducta para contigo, pero hoy estoy dispuesta a pagar lo que me pida tu amo para que te liberte” (163) [sometimes, I would reproach my behavior towards you, but today I am ready to pay whatever your master asks for to set you free] and from Jonatás’perspective “en su cuello lucía gruesas cadenas y sus brazos estaban cruzados con pulseras de oro. Le exasperó aquella amalgama negro-blanco de su mamá” (163) [on her neck, big chains were shining and golden bracelets would cross her arms. That combination of black and white of her mother exasperated her]. These three point of views reflect the difficulty of understanding her participation, from greed to a way to fund her daughter’s freedom to the annoyance expressed by Jonatás. For Nasakó,

her feelings of guilt are quickly justified by her ultimate goal of freeing her daughter, whereas for the latter, this participation is seen as a betrayal.

Nasakó's economic success in food catering gives her opportunities to open her own shop and to travel outside of the country. Nasakó also owns slaves and has freed women who work for her. That economic wealth and her identity outside of the plantation mark the contrast between her biography and her mother's and daughter's. Yet there remains unanswered questions about her decision to become an agent of slavery herself, especially in the light of the acts of resistance her mother carried out to become free. Nasakó herself became free by running away and there is an uneasy silence regarding her pursuit of those who are repeating the same actions that provided her with freedom. Beyond her biography, there is a wider question about how to represent the perpetrators and their motivations behind participating in the slave trade. Chiriboga suggests that contradictory terms are the best way to approach this inquiry as she highlights the layers that make up Nasakó's identity such as her survival of the middle passage, her multiple losses and her objective to become free. When Jonatás meets her mother, she simply cannot fathom her mother's decision to be a participant and she has no words. That silence and incomprehension show judgment on Jonatás's part and the stark intergenerational difference in articulating resistance strategies against the institution of slavery. It is through this inability to reconcile the choices of Nasakó that the author shows how unresolved silences are part of the process of depicting the history of slave trade. The lack of answers is also a powerful reminder to avoid monolithic representations of experiences of slavery and to analyze instead the gray areas in search of insights that complicate our understanding of the institution.

The fictionalized biography of Jonatás honors African slaves who fought during the wars of independence and proposes a nuanced understanding of the early stages of the resistance. Nasakó Zansi, later renamed Jonatás, was separated from her mother at the age of six. She was sold to Don Simón who was looking for a slave child to play with his daughter. The novel often features children and how female slaves attempted to save them from the chains of slavery. Don Simón observes, for instance, how over the years it was harder to find a slave child as he had been to several auctions and he could not find any: "Qué díficil encontrar niños en la región, las africanas no concebían regularmente para evitar el aumento de número de esclavos, para lo cual bebían infusiones de hojas de papaya" (77) [how difficult it was to find children in the region, African women did not conceive regularly to avoid an increase in the number of slaves and drank infusions of papaya leaves to do so]. His observations reinforce the vulnerability of women slaves as their bodies were seen by themselves as vehicles of economic production and for its reproduction capabilities. His first impression of Jonatás, like many others, is a mix of fear and disgust as she has many visible scars from early sicknesses : "ellos se asombraron al verle la cara con las huellas que le habían dejado las viruelas y pasaban de los gestos de horror a la admiración; Jonatás como ninguna otra mujer, sabía captar la atención, todos concentraban las miradas en sus ojos"(111)[they were astonished when they saw her face with scars that were left by smallpox and their expressions changed from horror to admiration; Jonatás like no other woman, knew how to catch the interest, everyone fixed their gaze on her eyes]. From a very young age, Jonatás had to always convince others to look beyond her scars and there is constantly a contrast between the

gaze of others and her inner reflection. At the same time, these visible scars on her face hide the emotional toll of the slavery experience that is not seen by the naked eye.

Through the character of Jonatás, Chiriboga explores what it meant for a child to grow up in slavery and the noticeable facial marks raise the question about the nature of the invisible scars of trauma. In the novel, the presence of children is noticeable ("el dieciocho por ciento de los esclavos eran niños" (33) [eighteen percent of the slaves were children]) and they often bear witness to violence committed on their parents. In "Notes on Trauma and Community" Kai Erikson makes a connection between wounds on the body and its impact on the mind by defining trauma as "a blow to the tissues of the body or more frequently now to the tissues of the mind that results in injury or some other disturbance" (183). In the case of Jonatás, an invisible scar is the loss of her mother Nasakó and living like an orphan without the emotional support of a family. It is this pain that makes up the core of her friendship with Manuela as both of them long for a maternal figure in their lives. Jonatás is often consumed by the absence of her mother, worrying about her whereabouts, idealizing her and rejoicing at the thought of being reunited one day. She is also worried as she is known as Jonatás and the name her mother gave her (Nasakó Zansi) is unknown to others. These concerns reflect the difficulty to trace lineage due to the multiple name changes, separation of families and moving from one plantation to another. The invisible scars also refer to the loss of dignity and denial of basic rights in the way that slaves are portrayed. For instance, during the auction, the plantation overseer compares Jonatás' body parts to an animal "baila, imita a la perfección a todos los animales, en especial a los caballos (...) mírenle los ojos vivos, como de mono, tiene piernas largas y buena dentadura" (76) [she dances, imitates

perfectly all the animals especially horses (..) look at her bright eyes, like a monkey, she has large legs and a good dentition]. In that moment, Jonatás performs each gesture laughing, yet behind the humor lies a deep pain. Those words take away her humanity and reduce her to a role of entertainment and servitude. Lastly, another invisible scar is the intergenerational trauma in her family tree, as Jonatás was named after her grandmother Ba-Lunda. In each generation, loss of freedom, familiar landmark and dignity among others makeup wounds that never healed and are internal scars that fuel their ways of dealing with their social status.

By imagining the childhood of Jonatás, the author manages to pinpoint the beginning of a political awareness and her involvement in the wars of independence. Through various games, Jonatás and Manuela see themselves as soldiers, opposing restrictive gender norms of their time. Over the years, their legal status as marginalized women unites them and they develop a sincere relationship based on compassion. Their friendship evolves as Jonatás introduces her to life outside of the main house precisely in the slave quarters. It is in those moments that Jonatás develops a political consciousness questioning her status as a slave, the spatial divisions in the plantations and the unfair mistreatment. Jonatás has also befriended older women and, with Manuela, they listen carefully to their experiences of slavery: "las esclavas volvían a narrarles cómo las habían capturado, cómo las trasladaron y volver a vender" (84) [the female slaves told them how they had been captured, how they were moved and sold again]. As she listens to these testimonials, Jonatás becomes resentful and angry and knows that fighting for justice is the only solution. This focus on her emotional development is explicit to showcase the root and core reasons that led her to participate in the army. Simón Bolívar is only

mentioned at the very end when Manuela meets him, and the plot suggests that Jonatás truly believed that political independence itself would lead to the end of slavery.

There are also specific examples of how Jonatás plays a pivotal role as a contact person between the slave quarters, the main house and the community outside the plantation: "hizo amistad con soldados; ellos le suministraban informaciones que transmitía a su ama; y ella, a su vez, a su hermano José María, llegado con el batallón Numancia. Con él, las tres practicaron el manejo de la lanza, la espada y el arcabuz"(153) [she befriended soldiers, they delivered information that she would transmit to her mistress; and the latter, on her side, to her brother José María, who had arrived with the Numancia battalion. With him, the three practiced the use of the spear, the sword and the arquebus]. As Jonatás and Manuela learn to use these weapons, they are participating actively in the public sphere, relay confidential information, and spy on high officials. They also encourage other slaves to join in their forces and even steal property: "Una madrugada, tomaron dos recuas de la hacienda de un familiar y las envían a Sucre con quince peones. En el trayecto, liberan esclavos y convencen a curiosos para que marchen con ellas y se enrolen en el ejército independentista" (164) [One early morning, they took two mules from the farm of a family member and they sent them to Sucre with fifteen laborers. On the way, they free slaves and convince those who are curious to leave with them and join the pro-independence army]. The specific mention of Antonio José de Sucre, one of Bolívar's closest friends, adds a dimension of historical veracity to these portrayed actions. The open ending of Jonatás and Manuela in the battlefields reaffirms a nuanced gendered and racialized representation of the wars of independence and the process of nation formation.

Conclusion

Prior to the publication year of *Jonátas y Manuela*, social movements in favor of a conceptualization an Afro-Ecuadorian identity were slowly emerging in the province of Esmeraldas. The *Centro cultural afro-ecuatoriano* organized each year a colloquium to promote the image of a multiethnic Ecuador, address silences surrounding the history of slavery, and question Ecuadorian official history. In *Lo afro y la plurinacionalidad: el caso ecuatoriano visto desde la literatura* (1999), Michel Handelsman notes that given its geographic position and racial composition, Ecuador has been perceived mostly as an Andean country which has been reinforced by the dominant historical narrative. Furthermore, in their definitions of "mestizaje"[12] scholars have not included the African presence, focusing mostly instead on the indigenous heritage even in works published in the last decade.

With *Jonatás y Manuela* (1994), Luz Argentina Chiriboga memorializes the diverse experiences of slavery in colonial Ecuador and promotes a multiethnic image of the nation. In doing so, she inserts African women slaves and their descendants in key moments of nation building and in the discussion of citizenship. In "(W)riting Collective Memory (De)spite State", Catherine Walsh and Juan García Salazar look at national discourses in contemporary Ecuador pointing out that "the absence of African descendants is, in fact, a legacy and characteristic of the Ecuadorian state, one that can be traced back to the nineteenth-century" (253). Luz Argentina Chiriboga rewrites misrepresentations of women African slaves and their descendants as voiceless and

[12] For more information about this dialogue, see Manuel Espinosa Apolo's *Los mestizos ecuatorianos y las señas de identidad cultural* (1997), Catalina R.Suárez's *El racismo en el Ecuador contemporáneo* (2001) and John Antón Sánchez's *El proceso organizativo afroecuatoriano* (2011)

powerless to determine their fate through the courage of Ba-Lunda and her granddaughter Jonatás. Her novel is an important contribution to reconsider the traditional image of Ecuador as an Andean country to a multiethnic and multicultural nation. Chiriboga also claims the interpretative nature of the historical archive and reveals that silences are part of the remembrance process and a powerful mode to understand traumatic experiences. By exploring its multiple meanings, the author is able to highlight instances where it reflects an inability to find words after a shock, thought-processes in an African language that cannot be spoken and also a space to plan out acts of resistance.

Since the publication of the novel, there have been important political changes that aim to recognize Afro-Ecuadorians in various ways especially in the new millennium. For instance, in 2001, a census gave the option of identifying oneself as Afro-Ecuadorian. Seven years later, the Ecuadorian constitution included specific clauses recognizing the rights of Afro-Ecuadorians and granting them a political space. Nonetheless current sociological works also indicate that there is still prevalent misconceptions about Afro-Ecuadorians communities and a need to continue promoting an image of a multicultural Ecuador in which Afro-Ecuadorians have played a foundational role.

Chapter Two

On Honoring the Legacy of Afro-Peruvians and Recreating Forgotten Voices in *Malambo* **by Lucía Charún-Illescas.**

In 2013, Lucía Charún-Illescas, author of *Latinoamérica en Hamburgo* (1995) and *Malambo* (2001) was recognized by the Peruvian government for her contribution to the national culture as "Personalidad Meritoria de la Cultura Peruana". Born in Lima, Charún-Illescas is considered the first Afro-Peruvian woman writer and she has been living for the past twenty years in Germany. In an interview with Panamanian writer Luis Pulido Ritter, Charún-Illescas reveals that she has been profoundly moved by her multiple trips to Ghana and her visits of Elmina Castle, a fort where African slaves were brought and held captive before leaving through the door of no return. In that interview, Charún-Illescas also shares her conflicted sentiments in regards to the silence surrounding the slave trade from African scholars, novelists, and even in the courses taught in Ghanaian universities.[13] Nonetheless, she treasures a deep spiritual dimension that she encounters in her trips*: "*me conmueve pisar el suelo de antaño, reconocer un

[13] In Facing up to the Past (2001), the Cameroonian scholar Achille Mbembe attributes this silence to "guilt and the refusal of Africans to face up to the disturbing aspect of the crime that directly involves their own responsibility" (26). In "Of Forts, Castles and Silences", the Ghanaian novelist Ama Ata Aidoo even adds that "the fact the slave trade was never discussed, could have been the result of either the unplanned byproduct of some collective amnesia: itself an outcome of pain and shame or a willful conspiracy of silence that is only challenged by the strength and solidity of the forts and castles themselves" (30). On the other hand, it is important to note that the visible physical spaces of slavery such as the Elmina Castle in Ghana or the House of Slaves in Senegal are not the only challenging silence over slavery in Africa. Several African authors have portrayed the history of slavery in their works, shattering the perception of silence from the African perspective. For instance, in the plays *Bacchae of Euripides* (1973) by Nigerian writer Wole Soyinka and *Anowa* (1970) by Ghanaian novelist Ama Ata Aidoo there are characters who deal with the slavery past. Similarly, in her first novel *Homegoing* (2016) the Ghanaian-American author Yaa Gyasi imagines the opposite destinies of two sisters and their genealogies, one enslaved in the United States and the other married to an English man and free in Ghana. Lastly, slavery is also featured in oral traditions and in praise songs in African archives that are not easily accessible as they have not been translated.

rostro que pudo ser el mío, apretar las manos tal vez de quizás un pariente lejano y redescubrir raíces comunes aunque tengamos que hacerlo en idioma ajeno" (n.p) [I am moved when I set foot on the land from the past, recognize a face that could have been mine, shake the hands of perhaps a distant parent and rediscover common roots even though we have to do it in a foreign language].

In her first novel, Charún-Illescas revisits the history of a present-day neighborhood in Lima, Malambo, and recovers its importance during the colonial period as a community inhabited by slaves who had escaped from their masters. The author focuses on slaves' subjectivities by imagining voices of freed and maroons slaves, the ways they perceived themselves and described their own worlds. In doing so, she dismantles notions of voiceless slaves and sheds light on the overlooked contributions of peoples of African descent in Peru. In the first part of this chapter, I will provide a brief summary of the state of the field that will highlight how scholarship over time has increasingly made visible the lives of Afro-Peruvians[14] in a country mostly defined by its Andean heritage. Then through the main character Tomasón, I will analyze the multiple roles of art in the novel as a vehicle for healing, a medium to invert power dynamics and a way to transmit cultural knowledge to younger generations in Malambo. Lastly, using theories by Pierre Nora, I will argue that Charún-Illescas uses ekphrasis and metafiction to establish her novel as a *lieu de mémoire*, a site of memory where contemporary readers can explore, remember and honor the ways African slaves and their descendants

[14] Though the term "Afro-Peruvian" is never used by Charún-Illescas in her novel, I use it here to refer to Peruvians of African descent as it is used in Peru nowadays.

negotiated access to a discursive space in Peru to challenge the limits of their social status.

I. The African presence in Peru

A. History of Afro-Peruvians Studies and Literature

> "Scholars who have tried to reconstruct the intellectual history of African slaves and their descendants in Colonial Latin America are fully aware of the extreme difficulty of doing so on account of the scarcity of surviving texts."
> José R. Jouve Martín, *Blacks Doctors of Colonial Lima* (2014)

Estimating the exact number of African slaves and their descendants who lived in colonial Peru proves to be a daunting task that several scholars such as Frederick P.Bowser and José R. Martin Jouve question carefully. Scholars usually rely on administrative records in the archives, which show an undeniable African presence in Peru. Nonetheless, historians have often found several discrepancies in the numbers related to sale transactions in comparison with paid tax revenues or other receipts. To this regard, in *The African Slave in Colonial Peru* (1971) Frederick P. Bowser admits that "finding trustworthy statistics (…) for the first half of the sixteenth century"(341) was one of the most challenging aspect of his work and more than forty years later, José R. Jouve Martín shares the same hurdle. Afro-Peruvian Studies can be divided into three distinct periods that span from the decades of the thirties to present day. The first wave of scholarship aimed to document an African presence in the colonial period whereas the second wave attempted to understand the lives of African slaves and their descendants often in relation with indigenous communities. Studies published in the past two decades have privileged specialized topics, whether it is looking at the interaction of slaves with the written word or in scientific and religious domains.

The first works on Afro-Peruvian studies emerged in the decades of the thirties through the fifties with the main objective of asserting Peru as part of the African diaspora with methodologies drawn from the social sciences. These investigations provide a timeline of the arrival of the first African slaves, their diverse origins, the geographical areas where they lived and a description of slavery laws and prohibitions. For instance, in *Negros en el Perú* (1947), Roberto MacLean y Estenós traces the arrival of the first slaves to 1529 as part of the expedition led by Francisco Pizarro. MacLean y Estenós relies on several chronicles including the ones written by Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega to compile the history of African slaves and their descendants. It is important to note that his recreation of historical facts is based on his own interpretation and understanding of these chronicles and administrative documents, thus creating a heavily mediated narrative. MacLean y Estenós employs a rhetoric reminiscent of the representation of slaves in the nineteenth century, as he emphasizes the impact of the weather on their emotional state and portrays them as good-natured persons without agency. Published at the height of racial segregation in the United States, in his research Mac Lean y Estenós advocates that the question of race is not applicable in Peru: "el negro no sufre en el Perú las constantes humillaciones que lo flagelan en otros países" [Blacks in Peru do not suffer the constant humillations that are imposed on them in other countries] (41). Many of his arguments were revised in later scholarship by others (including the statements that the African presence declined drastically after the wars of independence and his claim of prohibited relationships between Indigenous and Africans).

Studies published in the decade of the 1970s also convey MacLean y Estenós' arguments that African slaves were better treated in Latin America and that Peru did not have the same negative racial experience as the United States. In *Presencia del negro en el virreinato del Perú* (1971), Emilio Harth-Terré echoes MacLean y Estenós' stance as he asserts that "la integración se ha realizado sin recios choques, ni agudas violencias" (5) [The integration was achieved without any strong shocks nor intense violences] (5). Harth-Terré focuses on the ethnic diversity as well as the makeup of the religious brotherhoods as a way of socializing and preserving some African traditions. He also brings attention to the fact that some members of Indigenous communities could also own slaves for domestic chores thus modifying the traditional image of slave masters. In *The African Slave in Colonial Peru* (1974), Frederick Bowser revises conclusions found in earlier works as he displaces the setting of slavery from countryside to the city: "the main difference in Peru is that forced Indian labor on a massive scale coexisted with African slavery and it was above all an urban institution" (viii). Bowser also refers to an important flaw in MacLean y Estenós' and Harth-Terré' conclusions. Despite the vast documentation available on Afro-Peruvians, the information is on the community in general and not on individuals because slaves were not perceived in that manner. It is challenging to depict their worldview even though some legal documents offer insights onto their lives. Indeed, in the recent introduction to *Afro-Latino Voices (*2009), Kathryn Joy McKnight still maintain that mediation in the records and the lack of direct voices are obstacles in the field, explaining that "the written sources in which their voices survive are primarily juridical, ecclesiastical, and administrative documents located in the archives of Europe and Latin America" (ix). Moreover, most legal documents were

written by European scribes, who interpreted the words according to their own ideological worldview and had to record them by respecting the conventional norms of said documents.

Lastly, scholarship published in the decades of the 1990s and in the new millennium offer more nuanced versions of the history of Afro-Peruvians by examining the diversity of identities in the enslaved communities and by exploring the constant interactions with the indigenous communities. For instance, In *Noirs et Indiens au Pérou* (1990), Jean-Pierre Tardieu draws attention to Africans in the Iberian Peninsula who went to Peru as subjects of the Crown or as soldiers who could obtain land as a reward for their good and faithful services. On the other hand, in *Esclavos de la ciudad letrada* (2005), José Ramón Jouve Martín examines how African slaves and their descendants used the written word to define themselves against the institutional frameworks, to assert their needs and to create connections in their communities. Even though they did not have a political space, Jouve-Martín demonstrates that women in particular sought access to written documentation on a frequent basis to define their social position and obtain their freedom to protect the next generation from being slaves. In his most recent publication *The Black Doctors of Colonial Lima* (2014), Jouve Martín studies scientific writings of three medical practitioners and demonstrates how they navigated the fluidity of racial categories during the colonial period to overcome multiple barriers and become highly respected intellectual figures.

It is important to note that until the publication of *Souls of Purgatory* by Nancy Van Deusen in 2004, there was no research dedicated solely to the experience of women of African descent during the colonial period. The historian Van Deusen transcribed and

edited an original diary written by Úrsula de Jesús (1604-1666) that she stumbled upon by pure coincidence during her research. She examines the lives of hundreds of Afro-Peruvian *donadas* or laborers who served in convents and how Úrsula de Jesús served as a role model because of her devotion and dedication to her spiritual life. According to Van Deusen "from a chronological point of view, this diary might be among the very first written literary expressions, if not to say the first work of its kind published by a female African descendant in either Peru or Spanish America"(13). The scarcity of texts like this diary remains a challenge for scholarship. The representation of individual subjectivities beyond what is presented in legal or administrative documents has been thus addressed in literary texts by writers of African descent who set out to imagine, recreate and revive forgotten voices.

In Peruvian literature, the poet Nicomedes Santa Cruz (1925-1992) and the writer Enrique López Albújar (1872-1966) have received wide critical attention for their works and contribution to Afro- Latin American letters. In the past ten years, scholars like M'Bare N'Gom and Emmanuel Harris II have produced additional secondary criticism to highlight the works of other Afro-Peruvian writers. Only recently, in 2011 the journal *Callaloo* dedicated an entire issue to Afro-Peruvian literature which scholar Carlos L. Orihuela referred to it as an "acontecimiento cultural inédito" [an unprecedented cultural accomplishment] (510). Indeed, the publication of bilingual excerpts and articles in this special *Callaloo* issue increased awareness of Afro-Peruvian literature, its main writers and a sample of themes. Orihuela concludes by stating its importance because "es la primera publicación internacional que difunde una selección representativa de una literatura (…) poco conocida y con mucha frecuencia totalmente ignorada" (510) [It is

the first international journal that has given a representative selection of Afro-Peruvian literature (…) where it is unknown and frequently ignored] (297). Nonetheless, male authors have mostly dominated Afro-Peruvian literature, and Lucía Charún-Illescas remains among the first women writers of African descent.

B. Brief Summary of the novel and Secondary Criticism

In *Malambo* (2001), Lucía Charún-Illescas sets the narrative in the late sixteenth to mid-seventeenth century and tells the story from the perspective of a third-person omniscient narrator. The story begins and ends in Malambo, a neighborhood inhabited by freed and maroon slaves who often cross the bridge to go to Lima. After decades of working as a painter for the marquis Valle Umbroso, a slave master in Lima, the protagonist Tomasón decides to escape and goes to live in Malambo. The plot revolves primarily around the relationships that community members build with Tomasón and the impact of his paintings on their lives. The sub-plots include his friendship with an indigenous man named Yáwar Inka, who steals gold artifacts in churches to return them to his people. Then, there is the story of Pancha entrusted to the care of Tomasón by her father. Jacinto Mina is a freed Angolan slave who struggles with his past as a slave trader and finds solace in Tomasón's paintings. Other characters are Candelaria Obesario and Altagracias Maravillas, two slave women who work in the house of Manuel de la Piedra. They seek Tomasón's knowledge and advices as they are saving to buy their freedom. Guararé Pizarro is a Panamanian slave who searches for his father and hopes that Tomasón might help him in his quest by providing information about Malambo. Lastly there is the story of Chema Arosemena, a young Spanish man who comes to Lima with the project of writing its history. The novel narrates how community members except for

Chema interact with Tomasón finding strength and hope in his paintings. Thanks to them, Tomasón also changes by incorporating images that represent their worldviews and by asserting his voice as an artist dedicated to his community.

Existing secondary criticism has commented on the originality of *Malambo* as the first novel that depicts the complex and multiple African societies in Colonial Peru and on how Lucía Charún-Illescas creates spaces to discuss the reality of a multicultural nation. In "Yoruba cosmology as Technique in *Malambo*", Aida Heredia examines how Charún-Illescas integrates references to Yoruba religion to explore various levels of socialization in Afro-Peruvian communities and their interaction with their environment. These examples range from the description of healing traditions with herbs, rituals to honor the dead and keeping an overall strong sense of spiritual connection with the African continent through remembrance and oral story telling. Aida Heredia argues that in the novel, the practice of Yoruba-based religions provides an insight on the worldview of African slaves and serves as a source of empowerment and knowledge. Thus, through religion, there is a new sacred spiritual space that highlights the humanity and bravery of Afro-Peruvians. Rosario Montelongo Swanson argues that *Malambo* engages with nineteenth century works particularly Domingo Sarmiento's *Facundo* (1845), by alluding to the discussion on civilization and barbarie. Swanson notes that a consequence of this dichotomy was the denial of African and Indigenous roots. Swanson also explains that the author achieves this revision by integrating African gods, pondering the absence of maternal figures, and by accentuating the concept of orality as a vehicle to memory and history through the character of Pancha Parra. In "oralidad y escritura en *Malambo*", Martin-Ogunsola also elaborates the ways in which the oral provides an alternative voice

to the so-called official national history and canon. Like Swanson, Martin-Ogunsola points out the multiple allusions to the River Rímac, which signifies "Talking River" in Quechua and its personification in the novel. She looks at oral expression associated with residents of Malambo as well as myths and legends told to the younger generation to keep the memory of the African continent alive. Lastly Emmanuel Harris II and Martha Ojeda study in depth how Charún-Illescas asserts Peru as part of the African diaspora by analyzing moments of remembrance of the lost land, allusions to the middle passage and the ways in which characters honor their African heritage. In her articles, Ojeda argues that *Malambo* recuperates a forgotten aspect of the Peruvian history. By using the well-known trope of the search for identity and freedom, it allows a reflection on the reality of a multicultural Peruvian society. In her second study of the novel, Ojeda focuses on the physical space of Malambo as a neighborhood and as an authentic site of contestation and affirmation of an African identity.

II. The Powerful Role of Art as a Vehicle for Healing and Memory

Through the story of Jaci Mina, the novel portrays guilt, trauma and memory of the slave trade from the perspective of an agent of slavery. The full story of Jaci Mina, a friend of Tomasón, appears in chapter 9 and reveals his participation in the slave trade as an interpreter. Jaci's recollection of his past is triggered by a comment made by Tomasón: "¡Ay, Jaci! El mal tuyo no tiene cura" (146) [ooh Jaci! There's no cure for your sickness] (142) for his inability to free himself emotionally and mentally from his former master. Yet, the true illness is the guilt that consumes Jaci for causing pain and collaborating with slave traders. He also silences that aspect of his past and never discloses it to anyone. It is left to the third-person omniscient narrator shifts to tell the

story from Jaci's perspective. Contrast is used as a literary device to differentiate the motivations of Jaci and his friend Nganda who introduced him to slave trade. The reader immediately notices Jaci's hesitation to get involved as he asks questions about expectations related to his role as an interpreter and the reasons some are sold into slavery. Jaci gathers information to justify his actions by having a logical rationale which will reduce his ambivalent emotions about the trade. His friend Nganda offers an alternative perspective that does not take into account the implications of his acts: "la gente que no conozco o que me causa problemas, la vendo" (148) [I'd sell people I don't know or that cause me problems] (144). Nganda distances himself from those he captures by denying an existing relationship with them and as a retaliation for interpersonal conflicts. Yet when Jaci expresses his apprehension, Nganda stresses that it is a job "es simple, los tiempos cambian Jaci. A ti te pagan bien por hacer de intérprete y a mí por cazar esclavos. Si este trabajo no lo hacemos nosotros, lo harán otros" (151) [It's simple. Time change, Jaci. They pay you well for working as an interpreter and they pay me to hunt for slaves. If we don't do this job, others will] (147). He puts forward the monetary compensation as an explanation and situates himself as a part of a wider system with the reference to others. Nonetheless, once Jaci gets captured and experiences the trauma of the middle passage, he regrets deeply his participation and is overwhelmed with remorse. In his recollection of his past, Jaci finds a tension between the circumstances that led him to become an agent, the hesitation to participate, and his reasoning that as an intermediary, he was indirectly involved in comparison to his friend Nganda.

The guilt is even more pronounced when he is unable to reconcile his self-image with the terms of compassion expressed by Tomasón who considers him as "compadre

del alma" (14) [brother in spirit] (6), showing a deep bond between the two of them. Tomasón also expresses his gratitude towards Jaci who built a house for him in Malambo: "si tenía donde vivir (…) se lo debía a Don Jacinta Mina" (14) [if Tomasón had someplace to live (…) it was because of Don Jacinto Mina] (6) thus recognizing his thoughtfulness and generosity. Jaci is also deeply appreciated by residents of Malambo for his leadership role in the religious brotherhood of slaves from Angola. These signs of high esteem humanize the figure of Jaci and bring up an empathetic response from the reader. Jaci silences his past for fear of repercussions, exclusion and loss of community ties. Still, he is unable to reach a middle ground between his guilt and the positive recognition of his acts of service because he feels that he is not deserving of mercy. Through Tomasón's paintings, Jaci takes steps towards self-forgiveness and experiences a relief from his anxieties about his past. When he admires one of Tomasón's paintings, he finds healing and redemption: "reconoció que era su mejor obra. El Cristo lo conmovió. Igual que en la choza, en el Cristo reverberaba un resplandor de luz y no sabía cómo también mantenía algo de oscuro, de resol desmenuzado, de polvillo prieto" (153) [It was his friend's best work. The Christ moved him. In the Christ there reverberated splendor of light that was like the light of the hut, but the Christ also expressed something of darkness, a broken reflection of the dark dust] (149). Jaci is moved by the interplay of light and darkness and can feel comfort in the representation of Christ. He is able to identify with the presence of darkness as he struggles with his own. The reference to the hut and light is a reminder of his own generosity when he made sure that Tomasón had a shelter right after his escape. For Jaci, this painting communicates the internal peace that

he is longing for and gives him hope that healing is ahead. It also functions as a form of prayer for Jaci and an affirmation that he is worthy of forgiveness.

Through the character of Jaci Mina, the author succeeds in presenting a complex view of silences surrounding those who participated in the slave trade by focusing on the ambiguities of feelings and historical circumstances. There is also a dialogue with Jorge Isaacs' novel *María* (1867) which remains the classic literary example of the history of African slaves in the Latin American literature canon. Isaacs highlights how wars in African regions could lead to the loss of social status, power and land through the story of Nay and Sinar, in episodes 40 through 46 of the novel. In that narrative, Isaacs imagines tensions among some tribes, the middle passage and recounts traditions present in Afro-Colombian communities. Both authors recreate the trauma of the middle passage particularly the language barriers, feelings of consternation, bewilderment and helplessness. In *Malambo,* Charún-Illescas adds a layer of complexity by leaving unresolved questions about the responsibility of those who participate and whether they should be forgiven. However art is presented to Jaci as a powerful mode to offer healing from his guilt and develop compassion towards himself.

For Tomasón, his paintings are not only a source of income but they also help him build community in Malambo, assert his voice as an artist, and transmit cultural and historical knowledge to a younger generation. From the beginning of the novel, Tomáson is described in terms of his artistic talents, which transcend his social status as a slave and grant him respect and authority beyond the circles of his master. Tomáson occupies a central role in his community for his knowledge about African traditions, his ability to write and forge passes, but most importantly the emotional impact of his paintings. The

third-person omniscient narrator shows his creative process, his color sense, circumstances surrounding the commission of his work, the type of painting and the reaction of the recipient. Through art, Tomasón becomes a source of strength and wisdom for community members who are attempting to reconcile their social status and their desire to become free. In the text, he is referred to as "el pintor" [painter] as a sign of high esteem and he is always depicted in words of praise and admiration.

The reader learns that Tomasón received a rigorous artistic education as an apprentice with Simón Rivero, the official painter of a Jesuit monastery in Lima. He was trained to paint religious figures and over time, he developed his own aesthetic and critical eye, which are the foundations of his success. He is solicited for his ability to add a personal dimension to classical images corresponding to his own creativity and imagination. His talent as a painter goes beyond Malambo and his reputation extends to Lima arousing enthusiasm and awe for his work: "es que la fama del pintor era misterio surtidor de admiraciones y respetos" (14) [the fame of the painter was a mysterious fountain of admiration and respect] (6). His ability to create with very little resources is also emphasized throughout the novel particularly at the beginning when he paints the archangel Gabriel: "no se podrá quejar el amo porque lo hice con sobras de pintura, por no hablar de las brochas rangalidas y lampiñas "(13) [Master can't complain about the way it turned out, because I made it with leftovers of the paint, not to mention the tattered and hairless brushes] (5). His resourcefulness reinforces his artistic talent to reproduce any religious figure with very little materials. His recognition beyond Malambo indicates that his audience are buyers from his master and locals who purchase directly from him:

> Porque si los clientes de su amo, el marqués del Valle Umbroso, compraban pinturas para adornar capillas, quienes acudían directamente a Tomasón traían distintos apremios. Precisaban un cuadro de Santiago, para que el santo les facilitara la doma de sus potros chúcaros. Un San Antonio, a fin de recuperar alguna cosa extraviada o conseguirle novio a la hija que ya va para tía. (19)
>
> Because if the clients of his master, the marquis of Valle Umbroso, bought the paintings to decorate their chapels, those who came directly to Tomasón brought quite different requests. They would ask him for a painting of St. James so that the saint would help them tame their wild horses. A St. Anthony in order to find something lost in the house or to find a suitor for the daughter who was heading towards being an aunt. (11)

As several buyers surround themselves with his paintings, they recognize his art as a source of hope as Tomasón reproduces a vision that gives them faith in their personal endeavors.

Tomasón also starts to change as he listens to the needs of community members and by realizing that his art can serve as a powerful vehicule for the transmission of cultural knowledge. This change was prompted by a comment made by Juanillo Alarcón, a neighbor who asked him to consider painting religious figures close to their cultures:

> -¡Ayé, ayé misangre! Yo hace rato que ando trotando con decirle un pedido, sin falta de respeto al maestro pintor que con sus linduras le da gusto a su amo y harta plata. ¿No cree used que está bueno ya eso de estar pintando puro dios y santo blanco? ¿Acaso no sabe de otra cosa? ¡Con tanto santo bueno y dios honrado que en Guinea tenemos hasta para regalar! Desde que nos trajeron a estas extrañezas

> todos los negros debemos ser uno solo. ¿No le parece a usted que estaría bueno invocar a Elegguá para que nos dé coraje y paciencia con lumbre de camino, y que Oggún nos reponga de las fuerzas a tanto maltrato? (22)
>
> Hey, hey misangre. For a while now, I've been trying to ask you a favor, without disrespecting the master painter whose beautiful works please his master and earns him a lot of money. Don't you think that you've already painted enough white gods and saints? Is it that you don't know anything else? With so many good saints and honest gods in Guinea that we have enough to give away! Ever since they brought us to these strange parts, we Negroes should be united. Don't you think it would be good to pray to Elegguá so that he gives us courage and patience, with fire for the journey, and that Ogún replenish our strength against so much abuse? (15)

In his request, Alarcón acknowledges first a common kinship with Tomasón and then contextualizes the need of a different direction to serve the needs of peoples of African descent. He encourages Tomasón to become a voice for his community and use his gifts to inspire and teach scenes and religious figures images that reflect their cultures. Alarcón makes references to the diverse pantheon of deities from the Yoruba religion (the orishas). This request also coincides with a moment when Tomasón was searching for a new direction in his life after escaping from his master and in his response to Alarcón he promises to follow through. From that moment forward, Tomasón paints mostly African gods and the narrative includes descriptions of these figures. For instance, in his representation of the religious figure Babalú-Ayé, associated with illnesses and healing, he highlights a contrast between pain and perseverance to keep moving: "Tomasón lo

dibujó con una túnica de harapos y su cuerpo lacerado, apoyado en dos palos para caminar" (172) [Tomasón drew him with a tunic made of rags. His lacerated body was supported by two walking sticks] (167). In this illustration, the condition of the body is marked by wounds of an unknown origin and the tunic mirrors the same state instead of serving as a protective cover. Yet the walking sticks could be interpreted as symbols of resilience and courage to keep going regardless of the pain from the body. This painting serves a reminder and encouragement for others to find strength in their current situation.

The hope that Tomasón transmits to others, through his paintings, mirrors his own journey to becoming a role model in his community. As he was getting older, he escaped so that he could live the rest of his life by following his own wishes. His house in Malambo becomes a refuge for himself and for others as he opens his doors to those who are seeking a shelter: "como le dije ya, en Malambo están ustedes a salvo. Mi vivienda es respeto y si necesitan atravesar el puente hacia Lima, yo mismo les escribo un salvoconducto como los que hacen los amos para mandarnos de viaje" (31) [As I said to you before, in Malambo you're safe. My house is respectable, and if you need to cross the bridge to Lima, I myself will write you a pass, exactly like the ones that the masters make when they send us on a trip] (24). As he is welcoming Pancha and her father whom had recently escaped, Tomasón emphasizes the sense of community and solidarity that he fosters in Malambo. He also makes references to the accuracy of his writing abilities and representing a document truthfully, like in his paintings. Furthermore, by reproducing the exact permission, he inverts the power relationship of master-slave as he puts forward his intellectual abilities and positions himself as a facilitator of travels.

Tomasón also comments the meaning of each painting and reinforces remembrance processes with the African continent: "los dioses de mis sueños son purita verdad. Lo mismo les pasa a nuestros creadores de Guinea, que desde que los pinto nos visitan seguido aquí en Malambo, no se cansan de rondar huertas y sus pasos grandotes cavan esas charcas que andan por la orilla del Rímac (35) [the gods of my dreams are purely true. The same thing happened to our creators from Guinea, who, ever since I painted them, still visit us in Malambo. They never get tired of strolling around the gardens, and their huge steps dig those puddles that walk along the bank of the Rímac] (26). In his description, Tomasón highlights the veracity of the gods, blurring the lines of imagination and reality. By pointing out physical traces outside, he suggests that residents of Malambo are part of a wider diasporic community, emphasizing their connection to the African continent. Furthermore, by looking at the paintings and by asking questions, a younger generation acquires a cultural knowledge through him.

When Tomasón changes his artistic direction, he begins to transform his paintings as narratives that memorialize cultural traditions and talk about trauma. In her theories on memory, Elizabeth Jelin emphasizes that forgetting is part of the process "dealing with memories entails paying attention to remembrance and forgetting, to narratives and acts" (8). Jelin explains the narrative process of a memory by looking at the relationship between past and present: "the past acquires meaning in the intersection with the present, in the act of remembering and forgetting" (12). She also adds that "the interrogation of the past is a subjective process. It is always active and socially constructed in dialogue and interaction with others" (16). Through art, Tomasón bears witness to the lives of those who died as slaves as a result of violent punishments. For instance, as he explains

to Pancha a new painting he is starting, he shares with her the history of his friend Bernabé: "toca muy bien la makuta, como le llama a ese tambor de conversar (…) A él, lo acusaron de matar a su amo y parece que era verdad (…) no lo juzgo" (92) [he plays the *makuta* well- that's what they call the talking drum (…) they accused him of killing his master. And it seemed like it was true (…) I don't judge him] (87). In his description, Tomasón first teaches Pancha the name and use of an instrument that she did not know. He also revives the life of Bernabé and rewrites his representation from a criminal to an accomplished musician. Tomasón reiterates the importance of not judging regardless of the nature of the acts committed. In this painting of Bernabé, the past is revisited and rewritten to depict a more complex representation of his character based on compassion and humanity. His painting serves as a counter-memory to those accusations. By dialoguing with Pancha in the process, Tomasón is keeping alive the memory of Bernabé. Art allows him to pay tribute to Bernabé, gives voice to his own pain of losing his friend and is a part of his grieving process.

In *Malambo,* community relationships are highlighted through the constant interactions between neighbors and Tomasón and the ways he changes as a result of the trust, esteem and friendship he gains from them. Thanks to those nurturing relationships, Tomasón begins to assert more his voice as an artist, refusing to make sacrifices on his time and the direction of his work. For instance, in a conversation with Venancio, a community member, Tomasón inverts the power dynamics between a slave and a master by putting his work first and his vision: "que el amo espere. Yo acabo esto y después sigo pintando ese Cristo Crucificado para Altagracia (111) [let the master wait. I'll finish this

and then I'll paint the Crucified Christ for Altagracia] (106). By defining his own priorities, Tomasón sets new boundaries and positions himself as an authority figure.

Having escaped to live in Malambo, he now paints on his own terms, chooses his projects instead of those assigned by the Marquis. Tomasón is aware that his talent gives him a space to redefine his relationship and he claims power by reminding his master that his paintings are invaluable: "si usted me acusa yo me planto en seco y no vuelvo a pintarle ni el resuello de una plumita de ángel" (25) [If you accuse me, I'll stop right there and I'll never even paint a puff of an angel feather] (17). Through this condition, Tomasón reminds his former master that he would lose more by accusing him of having escaped, reinforcing his position of power. With this shift, men and women Malambo witness new ways to assert their voices and to seek individual agency and self-expression in creative ways.

Through his art, Tomasón provides others a venue to seek solace, find hope and a sense of healing. As he starts to paint daily scenes from the neighborhood of Malambo, he conveys messages of encouragement and strength. For instance, he often depicts bulls in reference to the slaughterhouse in Malambo where he often sees them resisting as they are brought in. In one of his compositions, much attention is placed on the gaze and how the bull gets up after falling, even if it means stumbling in the process:

> Tomasón observa cómo el parpadeo de la luz le va dando vida al toro pintado.Viento y claroscuro hieren sus cuernos alabastro. Lo sacuden. La bestía inclina la testuz. Adelantando su ágil mole de carne, siembra las pezuñas tensas en el suelo. Retrocede un tranto. El rabo inquieto latiguea en el aire. Un breve zarandeo y el toro da la impresión de lanzarse para dar la última cornada. Por

> instantes, Tomasón cree ver acortarse la distancia entre él y el animal pintado y lo invade una infinita congoja. (117)
>
> Tomasón observes how the flickering light gives life to the bull painted on it. Wind and chiaroscuro beat down on the alabaster horns. They shake him. The beast tilts his head. He advances his agile mass of flesh; he plants his tense hooves in the ground. He draws back a little. His restless tail whips the air. A brief shiver, and then the bull strikes out to give the decisive gore. For an instant, the painted bull seems huge and now too close to Tomasón. He is filled with an immense distress. (113)

The light that renders the bull more alive gives more intensity to the bull by first drawing attention to his horn or head and by indicating his reaction. Gaze changes from the bull to the painter and an identification of both beings in the last sentence when the reader cannot identify who feels the distress. The personification of the bull can be interpreted as a homage to the strength and resistance of slaves during the colonial period.

In the novel, through ekphrasis and metafiction, Charún-Illescas configures Malambo as an important memorial space of the history of slavery in Peru. Pierre Nora's theory on "les lieux de mémoire" further helps us to understand Charún-Illescas's recreation of the neighborhood of Malambo. For him, "there are lieux de mémoires, sites of memory, because there are no longer milieux de mémoire, real environments of memory" (7). Sites of memory, then, "originate with the sense that there is no spontaneous memory, that we must deliberately create archives, maintain anniversaries (…) bills because such activities no longer occur naturally" (12). Revisiting the meaning of Malambo in the colonial period as a neighborhood of freed and maroon slaves turns

the neighborhood into a site of memory, and an act of positive resignification. Just as Tomasón is creating content that inspires and builds community, Charún-Illescas perhaps achieves a similar response with contemporary readers with her novel. In his paintings, Tomasón puts forward representations that resonate with values of residents of Malambo, affirming that their voices matter and are important. By reinterpreting classical images of religious figures and by establishing new slave-master boundaries, Tomasón exemplifies acts of resistance and serves as a model to others for tracing a path that contradicts the limits of their social status. Similarly, the author guides readers to the colonial period to learn more about the history of African slaves and their descendants and explore their legacy in a fictionalized yet actual neighborhood.

In the novel, ekphrasis also dialogues with other modes of representations and expressions such as orality as Tomasón shares oral traditions, proverbs and tales from his native land when he paints or when community members visit him. As he paints on the walls of his house religious gods from African traditions, the creative process triggers stories that he had never shared with others before he lived in Malambo. Tomasón fulfills the role of a traditional griot[15] as found in West African societies, a figure who is an oral artist and considered the repository of genealogical history, knowledge and cultural memory. Furthermore, others describe his writing skills as "pintar las palabras" (32) [to draw letters] (24). Along with his paintings, Tomasón starts to write down songs and legends so that the next generation will know those oral traditions. In this instance, Charún-Illescas makes a direct reference to an African proverb[16] that when an old man

[15] See Okpewho, Isidore. *African Oral Literature: Backgrounds, Character, and Continuity.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1992.

[16] The proverb "Un vieillard qui meurt est toute une bibliothèque qui brûle" literally translated as "an old man who dies is an entire library that burns" is a proverb originally attributed to the

dies, it is an entire library that burns. There is, however, a tension between orality and writing down as Tomasón is one of the few in the community who can read and write. With orality, usually some elements of a story might change over time depending on the person who is transmitting the story. There are still unresolved questions in the novel as to whether these stories written down are still oral and who will read them since many residents cannot. For his part, Tomasón is afraid that these stories will be lost when he passes away and writing them down is a form of preserving this cultural knowledge. Furthemore, by keeping the story as it is, without additional changes or adaptations, Tomasón seeks to build a connection between Africa and residents of Malambo by ensuring that the stories he learned in his childhood are transmitted in their original way. With his paintings and writing, Tomasón is creating a living museum in his house, inviting residents of Malambo to feel inspired, hopeful and nourished spiritually as they learn the history of their ancestors while they pave new ways in Malambo and beyond.

The question of writing history and metafiction are embodied by the character of Chema Arosemena, a young Spanish historian who comes to Lima to write a book about its customs and traditions including those of the Indigenous and African slaves. He hopes to produce a work of reference that will be read in European circles and Manuel de La Piedra discourages him in his endeavors: "¿Cree que vale la pena dar tanto trabajo, Chema? Entiendo que escribe sobre plantas nativas y animales ¿más escribir sobre la vida de los esclavos? ¿Acaso no los tenemos también en España?" (78) [Do you think all that trouble is worth the work, Chema? I'd understand if you were writing about native plants

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Malian writer and scholar Amadou Hampaté Bâ (1900-1991). He pronounced it in a discourse to UNESCO in 1960 advocating for the preservation of oral cultural knowledge and heritage in African societies.

and animals. But why write about the life of the slaves? Don't we also have them in Spain?] (72). By questioning his rationale, the slave master Manuel de La Piedra discredits the intention of Chema's work and perpetuates a narrative where slaves are absent in a historical discourse. He is also assuming that all slaves are the same and erases the diversity of their experiences. At the same time there is a conflict of interest as he is financing Chema's book and occupies a position that could be scrutinized. Depending on the content, that work might challenge the power dynamics in place and Manuel de La Piedra prefers to oppose to the project.

There is also a tension between Chema's desire to be recognized by his peers and writing a historical narrative based on his observations. He wants to present himself as a first hand truthful witness by attending slave market auctions. Through metafiction, the author brings attention to the problematics of historical discourses, especially the intention of the person who writes it and his or her interpretation of events. In *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), Hayden White examines how the practice of writing History is influenced by the narrative strategies that the historian chooses to use and the purpose of the historical text. White coins the term "emplotment" to demonstrate that the historian has the ability to rearrange events in order to create a fiction that is influenced by his own cultural baggage, the language he uses and his overall agenda. He also explains that the historian uses "a figurative language instead of a technical language" (94) because it is more accessible to a general audience and it has the ability to give a significant meaning to historical events. White's main argument is that "historical narratives are considered to be verbal artifacts" (94), in other words writing history is reminiscent of writing fiction. Chema is unable to fulfill his goal due to conflict of interests, his research methodology

and most impostantly because he was never able to create meaningful connections in the community of Malambo. For instance, he does not seek the assistance of Tomasón, an essential key figure in getting information about the history of slaves and their descendants in Peru. The metafiction in the novel reveals that Chema is an unreliable narrator and his writing is mediated by his intentions, his limited understanding and the lack of significant Afro-Latino voices. Eventually he abandons his project and shift his focus to a venture that could be a source of income: "el estiércol de los pájaros de las islas enriquecen la tierra. Los campos europeos duplicarían su rendimiento abonándolos con el estiércol. ¡Ese guano acumulado por siglos en esas islas vale una fortuna!" (208) [The manure from the birds on the islands enriches the soil. The European fields would double their yield fertilizing with this manure. The guano accumulated for centuries on those islands is worth a fortune] (205). His sudden change of mind and the pursuit of fortune show his lack of investment in his initial project. Through his character, Lucía Charún-Illescas mirrors official historical discourses where the colonial past was constructed, imagined and rewritten by men who had a precise political agenda whether it is to legitimize, define or shape the creation of newly nation-states and national identities. In contrast, through Tomasón, the author puts forward counter-narratives that challenge the representation of official histories.

Conclusion

With *Malambo* (2001), Lucía Charún-Illescas brings attention to a neighborhood that played a central role in challenging racial and social definitions during the colonial period. By focus on one main character and his influence in his community, the author

envisions his legacy in transmitting African traditions and keeping alive the cultural memory of Afro-Peruvians. This gesture dialogues with similar initiatives in Afro-Peruvian folklore and music where artists and storytellers look towards the colonial period to revive forgotten practices. Furthermore, by focusing on artistic expression that defies limits imposed on social status, Charún-Illescas depicts new subjectivities that give voice, empower and show the ways in which African slaves and their descendants sought to claim agency in their circumstances. She is writing against mediated lenses that shaped the history of Afro-Peruvians and propose a narrative that contradicts the negative light under which they were portrayed in their time. Lastly, the author opens new dialogue about the representation of slavery in public spheres and invites a memorialization of an existing neighborhood as a living museum that deserves to have its history commemorated by a wider audience. Beyond the textual space, *Malambo* becomes a reminder of the contributions of Afro-Peruvians in all aspects of the local economy and a model where cultural diversity was honored and should be embraced as part of national identity.

Chapter Three

Breaking Silences and Confronting Family Secrets in *Le livre d'Emma* and *Rosalie l'infâme*

> "Grappling with memory is, I believe, one of many complicated Haitian obsessions. We have, it seems, a collective agreement to remember our triumphs and gloss over our failures. Thus, we speak of the Haitian revolution as though it happened just yesterday but we rarely speak of the slavery that prompted it. Our paintings show glorious Eden like African jungles but never the Middle Passage." Edwidge Danticat, *Create Dangerously* (2011)

In *Create Dangerously* (2011), a personal memoir about the intersection of art, writing and exile, Edwidge Danticat identifies a silence regarding the history of slavery in Haitian literature[17] because it brings up narratives of pain and trauma. In an earlier interview with Danticat, Évelyne Trouillot shared the same sentiment and both writers emphasize a need to revisit the period of slavery and explore silences related to gendered experiences. Similarly, in another interview Marie-Célie Agnant states regarding the erasure of that past: "je crois que la période de l'esclavage dans les romans haïtiens- contrairement aux Antilles françaises- est tout à absente, sinon refoulée. C'est une période tabou. Au fait, on peut toujours prétender que Haïti a tant d'autres problèmes immédiats, urgents" (388) [I think that the period of slavery in Haitian novels- contrary to the French West Indies- is completely absent if not suppressed. It is a period that is taboo. Actually, one can always pretend that Haiti has so many more pressing or urgent

[17] The use of the term "Haitian Literature" has been widely debated in academia given the fact that many works have been published outside of Haiti and in various languages ranging from French, Haitian Creole to English. In this chapter, my use of "Haitian Literature" encompasses literary texts by authors of Haitian origin.

problems] (388). The legacy of slavery in the present is a preoccupation that resurfaces in these conversations: is there a right time to revisit this past? When is the act of remembrance a priority? Why is it important to recount the trauma of slavery?

In her first novel, *Rosalie l'infâme* [*the Infamous Rosalie*] (2003), Évelyne Trouillot recreates the experiences of ordinary women during the slavery period, imagining the ways they claimed a voice through acts of resistance to challenge the limits of their social status. For her part, in *Le livre d'Emma* [*The Book of Emma*] (2001), Marie-Célie Agnant explores the intergenerational trauma of slavery when the main character Emma grapples with her family history and varying degrees of alienation as a scholar, woman of color and immigrant. Both novels create a textual space to discuss the traumas of the middle passage, to reimagine accounts of daily life in the plantations and to emphasize acts of resistance. *Le livre d'Emma* won the distinguished Prix Ringuet de l'Académie des Lettres du Québec and has been translated into Spanish, Italian, English and Catalan. Évelyne Trouillot received the prestigious "Prix Soroptimist de la romancière francophone", an award that recognizes the cultural and literary contribution of a novel by a woman writer in the French-speaking world. In the foreword of the English translation *The Infamous Rosalie* (2013), Danticat recognizes that the novel breaks silences and portrays women who are not usually featured in history books.

Scholars have recognized each novel's ability to offer an alternative gendered and racialized history that serves as a counter narrative to similar storylines told by Haitian male writers. Maria Adamowicz-Hariasz, Franca Bernabei, Lucie Lequin and Scott W Lyngaas analyze the interplay of gender, race and history in *The Book of Emma* using theories on hauntology and witnessing from LaCapra, Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman.

For their part, Colette Boucher, Eloise Brière, Antoinette Marie de Sol and Noëlle Caruggie read the female body as corporeal texts that narrate trauma and are sites of resistance or negotiating mechanisms to gain freedom or a more favorable treatment. This third chapter contributes to the previous discussions by offering a reading focused on the analysis of Emma and Lisette as third-generation narratives. I examine how these novels address the process of intergenerational transmission of traumatic experiences, focusing particularly on Emma and Lisette's attempt, as granddaughters, to recuperate their family histories in order to make sense and better understand their own place within a geneaology of women. First, I will provide a brief summary of representations of slavery in the Francophone Caribbean context to highlight a reluctance to revisit this past and a growing demand to create sites of memory. Then, I will analyze how both novels deal with the tension to reconcile the granddaughters's search for truth and the historical realities of the difficult ethical choices their ancestors had to make in order to survive.

I. The Shadow of the Past: Memorializing the History of Slavery in Francophone Caribbean Literatures and Studies

> "-Man Cia chère, à quoi peut bien ressembler un esclave, et à quoi peut bien ressembler un maître? "
> Simone Schwarz-Bart, *Pluie et Vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1972)
>
> "Ma Cia, dear, what is a slave, what is a master?"
> Simone Schwarz-Bart, *the Bridge of Beyond* (1974)

Hailing from Guadeloupe, Simone Schwarz-Bart's first novel *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle (*1972) features three generations of the Lougandor women who experienced the middle passage, life in sugar plantations and the post-slavery era. Schwarz-Bart is one of the first Francophone Caribbean writer who explicitly mentions

the institution of slavery in her works, followed by Maryse Condé also from Guadeloupe. A striking moment in the novel is when the main character Télumée innocently asks Man Cia, a friend of her grandmother's, to clarify representations of a slave and a master. At the age of 10, Télumée had recently moved to live with her grandmother as her mother was entering a new relationship. In her answer, Man Cia shows that reminders of the past are still visible in the present by asking her to go to the market and by guiding her to a specific house and their owners: "si tu veux voir un esclave (..) tu n'as qu'à descendre au marché de la Pointe et regarder les volailles ficelées dans les cages, avec leurs yeux d'épouvante. Et si tu veux savoir à quoi ressemble un maître, tu n'as qu'à aller à Galba, à l'habitation Belle-Feuille, chez les Desaragne. Ce ne sont que leurs descendants, mais tu pourras te faire une idée." (31) [If you want to see a slave (..) you've only to go down to the market at Pointe-à-Pitre and look at the poultry in the cages, tied up, and at the terror in their eyes. And if you want to know what a master is like, you've only to go to Galba, to the Desaragnes' house at Belle-Feuille. They're only descendants, but it will give you an idea] (54). The reference to the terror in the eyes of the encaged chicken and the specific name of a descendant leave the young Télumée speechless and horrified because she did not have any knowledge about this past. Through her grandmother, Télumée was learning for the first time about that period and the life story of her great-grandmother Minerve who was the last one to have experienced slavery. Later, in her adult life, Télumée remembers these stories passed down to her by grandmother when she works in the fields and realizes that the economic structures from the past had not changed much. With this novel, Schwarz-Bart is among the first to recreate fictionalized lives of ordinary women who do not appear in historical archives.

In *Caribbean Ghostwriting (2009),* Erica Johnson analyzes how the colonial past and slavery represent sources of ghosts in contemporary Caribbean Literature. Johnson defines ghostwriting as a process where the lives of real women "can be (re) invented and (re) created through the literary imagination but whose stories can never be known as such" (13). Therefore, the reader learns that these women existed yet their literary representation is a compelling fictionalized autobiography, incomplete and with unanswered questions about their lives. Johnson elaborates that a common strategy for Caribbean women writers is to make ample use of the tension between absence and presence found in historical archives in their own texts. Doris Kadish and Catherine Reinhardt have also recognized these silences in the archives due primarily to the absence of direct first-persons narratives in the Francophone Caribbean context. In *Claims of memory* (2006), Catherine Reinhardt analyzes contemporary traces of slavery in the French Caribbean particularly in Guadeloupe and Martinique by interviewing residents, interpreting the rhetoric used in brochures of museums or plantations for visitors, murals and memorial monuments. She finds that even though Guadeloupeans and Martinicans are addressing this silenced past, there continues to exist a selective memory where she notes an absence of the lives of slaves in the restored ruins or they are referred as laborers: "the raison d'être of these sites of memory is carefully removed from the narratives describing them.(..) They are again marginalized from the principle narrative as they were in 1789" (134). For her part, Kadish identifies a double silence, one from Haitians themselves, leery to scrutinize the pre-Revolution era and the second one from the French government unwilling to look towards the colonial past. Nonetheless, in the past sixteen years, there has been an increasing interest in reviving narratives of slavery,

which, in turn, has prompted French government and institutions to confront its colonial past and take active measures to establish sites of remembrance.

In 2001, France officially recognized slavery as a crime against humanity with the passing of the Taubira law[18]. One objective was to implement the history of slavery in school programs and national curriculum. Soon enough, however, the law of February 23, 2005, proposed that the positive benefits of colonialism should also be included in history courses, which sparked heated polemics and a backlash in France and its former colonies. Former President Jacques Chirac intervened and established May 10th as a day to commemorate the victims of the slave trade. He also created a special committee on the memory of slavery and a national research center. The implementation of these memorial laws and sites conveyed a need to open a dialogue about representations of slavery. There remained an uneasiness in public spheres to revisit the past and an urge to move forward instead. In 2010, Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy went to Haiti on an official mission that lasted less than four hours. It was the first time a French president visited Haiti since the end of the colonial era in 1804. In their encounter, both presidents emphasized the need to move forward and in his welcome speech, Former president Réné Préval stated that Haitians had already overcome the past politically and psychologically: "L'Histoire, c'est l'Histoire, et les colonisations ont été un phénomène mondial. Depuis l'indépendance, nous avons, politiquement et psychologiquement surmonté cette période difficile"(n.p) [History is History, and colonizations were worldwide phenomena. Since the Independence, we have overcame politically and psychologically this difficult era]. In

[18] The Taubira law, named after the French politician and Deputy Christiane Taubira, recognizes slavery as a crime against humanity and was passed on May 21st 2001. It has 5 main articles including teaching and adding the period of slavery in the French curriculum, establishing a commemorative date at the international level and in France.

their novels, Trouillot and Agnant contest this official narrative and show through the characters of Emma and Lisette that it is still not only important, but also necessary to examine how trauma has affected each generation and informed (or not) their life choices. By looking back to the past, Emma and Lisette are searching for answers about their own sense of place and identity as granddaughters of those who survived the middle passage. Through her grandmothers, they can see how the lack of space to process the traumatic experience has deepened feelings of sadness, pain and secrecy around the specific details of the period. At the same time, Emma and Lisette believe that it is their duty to learn and understand these difficult stories because forgetting them would be equivalent to erasing these voices from their family histories. With their novels, Trouillot and Agnant create a textual space to explore how the trauma of slavery and unsaid experiences of rape, infanticide, madness, loss and violence have shaped multiple genealogies of families. As Emma and Lisette probe silences regarding the absence of a father figure or marks on their grandmothers' bodies, they hope to inherit these testimonies to remember women in their families and to honor them.

The Book of Emma (2001) is set in the present day and begins with Emma Bratte arrested for murdering her baby daughter Lola and waiting to appear on trial. Emma is in a psychiatric hospital where Dr. MacLeod attempts to understand the reasons behind the murder, which occurred after she failed her dissertation defense for the second time. The novel is told from the perspective of Flore, an interpreter of Haitian Creole, hired to translate the psychiatric sessions as Emma refuses to speak in French even though she is fully fluent. Over time, Emma shares with Flore her family history tracing the lives of 4 generations of women beginning with Kilima, the ancestor who came as a slave when she

was a child, her grandmother Rosa, her mother Fifie and herself. In each generation, infanticide is a hidden secret that is revealed towards the end of the novel. Kilima killed her first daughter to spare her from slavery and Emma repeats the same gesture years later when she has her daughter. The novel is divided into four main parts dedicated to the story of each ancestor and told from the perspective of Flore. Emma learns her family history from Mattie who is the cousin of her deceased grandmother and the last surviving member of that generation. The novel ends with Emma's suicide in the psychiatric hospital and a changed Flore who is now more open to explore the legacy of slavery in her own family tree.

For her part, Évelyne Trouillot sets the main action in Saint-Domingue in 1750, a period of heightened fear and suspicion due to the increasing number of poisoning of slave masters[19]. The story is told from the perspective of the main character Lisette, a daughter of African slaves in her late teenage years. As Lisette narrates events in her daily life working inside the house of her slave masters, she is aware that she longs to be free and cannot reconcile that desire with her social status. She is also in a relationship with a maroon slave Vincent and is aware that each secret meeting puts them in danger. Lisette also attempts to resolve the mystery surrounding her ancestors, the Arada women, but when she asks her godmother Man Augustine for more information, she only encounters silence. As the novel progresses, Lisette turns towards other community

[19] In *Jonatás y Manuela,* Luz Argentina also sets the action in the last decades of the eighteenth century and emphasizes times of revolt and poisoning. At that time in Haiti, François Mackandal, a slave maroon, was a leader in maroon communities and made several poisons that were distributed in the plantations to kill slave masters. He was captured in 1758 and was publicly executed. In *Rosalie l'infâme,* his life story and his death are featured as part of testimonies that Lisette hears. For more information regarding Mackandal, see Janik Dieter.

members, asking them to share their own personal life stories. Hearing these narratives prompts her to take an active role as an informant inside the house of her slave masters, passing any information she overhears to family members of maroon slaves. Towards the end of the novel, Man Augustine finally reveals the life stories of each Arada woman to Lisette beginning with her mother Ayouba, and continuing with her grandmother Charlotte and her great-aunt Brigitte. Man Augustine also unveils the family secret about Brigitte, telling Lisette that her great-aunt killed seventy babies to spare them from a life of slavery. The novel ends as Lisette pregnant and wanting a life of freedom for her daughter, decides to join other maroon slaves.

II. Granddaughters In Search of Answers: the Transmission of Intergenerational Trauma

Marianne Hirsch's theory on postmemory provides an understanding of how the recollection of traumatic experiences is processed and even appropriated by a younger generation who did not necessarily live them. Studying the representation of the Holocaust, Marianne Hirsch defines postmemory as "the relationship of children of survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences that they 'remember' only as the narratives and images with which they grew up, but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right" (9). In her studies of recent Holocaust narratives,Victoria Aarons observes a shift in perspective when a third generation turns to that past in search of answers about the lives of their grandparents. Aarons finds that given the time and distance of the traumatic event, the narrative of the past is recreated in fragments: "Thus the third generation must gather knowledge piecemeal, from vague references, indirect stories, conversations overheard,

oblique observations, and from documents, abstract histories" (6). Furthermore, these recollections are mediated by the passing of time and the transmission from the second generation. Aarons remarks that to fill in the void, the third generation privileged accuracy of information: "this literature features a careful attention to detail, numbers, places, dates, and identities, as if the recreation and visualizing of the particulars will fill the empty spaces created by time and distance" (15). Even though these theories are based on the Holocaust, they provide a solid framework to interpret contemporary narratives dealing with other traumatic events of the past such as slavery. Hirsch and Aarons theories inform my analysis of both novels as I study the intergenerational transmission of trauma, in particular the initial hesitance and then the setting, content and delivery of the testimony. Aarons' description of the third generation research process will inform the way I examine how Emma and Lisette seek answers about the lives of their ancestors. In both novels, the structure of a genealogy allows to see the traumatic experience as lived by the first generation and how that trauma is conveyed, processed and understood by the second or third generations.

In *The Infamous Rosalie,* the transmission of the past seeks to complicate our understanding of slavery and to challenge preconceived notions regarding the ethics of survival. First, Lisette listens to testimonies from community members such as Fontilus, her childhood friend, Vincent her boyfriend, Gracieuse, who works in the same house as she and Michaud, a former overseer. Each one of them shares the emotional impact of being a slave and a tension to reconcile their social status and their own dreams of freedom. The testimonies of Gracieuse and Michaud force Lisette to recognize the complexity of their decision to participate in the slavery system as a mode of self-

preservation. For instance, throughout the novel, she has a conflictual relationship with Gracieuse and does not understand her intimate relationship with the master. Lisette judges her for using her body to gain a favorable treatment. Yet Lisette's godmother reminds her several times "les choses ne sont pas aussi simples que tu le crois" (12) [Things aren't as simple as you think] (4). This repetition functions as a warning against judgment, highlighting the complex nature of ethical choices. Through her godmother, Lisette learns the life story of Gracieuse who succumbs at the end of the novel to complications of the seventh abortion. The latter had chosen not to transmit the narrative of her trauma to Lisette personally because she wanted to protect her from the pain. From Gracieuse's life story, Lisette realizes that her decisions were motivated by survival, having lived through the trauma of the middle passage. Her godmother reinforces the issue of ethics with the observation "elle s'est servie de son corps pour éviter les champs de cannes et les chaudières de sucre bouillant. Elle a choisi son enfer. Fut-il pire qu'un autre ?" (102) [She used her body to stay out of the cane fields and away from the cauldrons of boiling sugar. She chose her hell. Is one hell better or worse than another?] (94). As Lisette is unable to respond to the question, the reader is also actively engaged in this process, viewing Gracieuse in a new light, as a character that rebelled against the institution of slavery in her own terms. This testimony also shatters Lisette's perceptions of what is real and what is a subterfuge in the slave master house. This uncertainty mirrors her apprehension to find out more about the life of her grand-aunt, fearing that the information will contradict her idealized representation. Lisette also recognizes that her naivety often prevents her from confronting the complexities of circumstances that push slaves to become agents themselves.

Along these lines, the testimony from Michaud, the former overseer further challenges Lisette's witnessing process as Michaud worked for the owners punishing other slaves. Through the eyes of Lisette, the reader sees the humanity of Michaud as he is described in terms of compassion and empathy. After an accident where he lost his arm, Michaud lives in isolated quarters with other slaves who cannot work anymore. He shares his story with Lisette to express remorse and guilt for his contribution to the pain of others. His emotional response and the silences in his narration accentuate his feelings of guilt and his wish for forgiveness. Lisette feels empathy for him in these moments "je n'aime pas les tremblements qui remplissent ses yeux de douleur, les balbutiements qui tressautent sous sa peau. Je pose ma main sur son bras droit" (24) [I don't like the tremors that fill his eyes with pain and the stammering that pulses beneath his skin. I put my hand on his right arm] (16). By touching him, Lisette expresses care and a way to support him emotionally. Silences in his narration also allude to the attempts that others made to kill him. This juxtaposition shows the ambiguity of his position as others want a revenge and Michaud seeks redemption. At the same time, by being an intermediary between slave maroons and their families, Michaud is actively rewriting his role showing that he can be trusted.

Lisette develops a friendship with him, bringing him newspapers and food scraps. From him, she also acquires linguistic knowledge as Michaud can recognize different African dialects. Through these exchanges, Lisette realizes that the space he occupies is defined by ambiguities as a former perpretator reconverted into an informant. Their friendship allows her to fully grasp her godmother's words and Gracieuse's choices. Furthermore, he advises her to keep an open mind and understand the extenuating

circumstances behind ethical choices: “tu verras autour de toi toutes sortes de stratagèmes que nous, esclaves, inventons pour essayer de survivre dans cette horreur. Certains te paraîtront dérisoires, d’autres te sembleront barbares mais qui peut vraiment juger ? Un être humain peut faire n’importe quoi pour que le souffle de sa voix lui appartienne. Il en a le droit” (51) [You’ll see all sorts of ruses that we slaves invent to try to survive this horror. Some will seem ridiculous, others barbaric, but who can really judge? A human being will do whatever he needs to do to make sure the breath that fills his voice belongs to him. It’s his right] (43). Michaud emphasizes different perspectives to attain the right of freedom and dignity. His words prepare her psychologically to face the full truth about her great-aunt Brigitte whom she had idealized throughout her life yet whose secrets she does not yet know.

As an orphan, Lisette relies on her grandmother and then her godmother to learn the history of her family, particularly their lives before they were captured as slaves. Lisette is particularly interested in the period between the middle passage and the transition to a new land but encounters a silence about it. To recreate that era, she gathers information through clues that she has, references to the past, conversations she overheard and her own interpretation of a set of objects she inherited from previous generations. These objects are a protective talisman and a piece of rope with seventy knots that once belonged to her great-aunt Brigitte. For Lisette, these objects create a direct connection, fuel her imagination about their lives and reinforce the mystery about the meaning of the rope. In her eyes, it is an ordinary object that she admires frequently making guesses to unlock its meaning. The fact that the name of Brigitte brings up admiration and respect in the community adds to Lisette’s intrigue. Even with the

informations she recollects, she is unable to compose a full picture and her godmother is the last surviving member that can shed some light to the mystery.

Her grandmother and godmother have emphasized on numerous occasions her resemblance with Brigitte. Therefore, Lisette uses the rope in remembrance moments and to feel closer to her great-aunt that she never knew: "j'égrène entre mes doigts les noeuds grossièrement faits du cordon de tante Brigitte" (32) [As if telling beads, I roll the roughly tied knots on Aunt Brigitte's cord between my fingers] (23). The word "égrèner" is usually used during a prayer "égrèner un chapelet", when a person holds a rosary and rolls its beads. For Lisette, Brigitte is a symbol of resilience and a model she aspires to emulate. Lisette's admiration has also a religious tone as she frequently invokes Brigitte's name in difficult moments, imagines her protection and holds her in high esteem. On several occasions, Man Augustine reminds her of the lessons she learned from Brigitte about the strength of Arada women including "les femmes Arada n'appartiennent à personne" (12) [Arada women belong to no one] (4) in order to teach her to reject her main identity as a slave. The references to the generation of Arada women are meant to comfort Lisette. They also help Lisette cope with her own trauma like her rape by the master's son: "tu es une femme Arada, tu le resteras (…) la marque de ta race est dans le blanc de tes yeux et tu mourras avec, comme ta grand-tante Brigitte, comme ta grand-mère Charlotte, comme ta mère " (40) [You're an Arada woman and you will always be (..) Your race is in the whites of your eyes, and you will die with it, just like your great-aunt Brigitte, your grandmother Charlotte and your mother] (32). In this instance, Lisette's godmother conveys to her goddaughter that the core of her identity is unchanged despite the violation she has experienced. There is also an allusion that other women in

her family might have gone through the same experience and sexual assault is part of their intergeneration trauma. At the same time, from the perspective of Lisette, these reaffirmations serve a springboard to inquire more about her great-aunt and the significance of the rope with seventy knots.

For her godmother Man Augustine, the right moment is crucial, the maturity level and ability to comprehend difficult ethical choices without judgment. At the same time, she is reluctant to revisit this past because she has to face her own feelings of shame and humiliation about her status as a slave. When Man Augustine finally shares the truth about Brigitte, silence and tears punctuate the transmission. By staying attentive to her godmother's reaction, Lisette notices that the meaning of the cord is far from what she had imagined: "je vois son regard fixer avec tristesse et horreur le cordon que j'ai gardé entre mes doigts(125) [I see her starting in sadness and in horror at the cord I hold between my fingers] (117). The mix of sadness and horror rewrites the character of Brigitte from an idealized image to someone who held a more ambiguous role. Lisette also gains a new interpretation of the silence that was meant to protect her and extend her innocence: "je voudrais pouvoir arrêter Man Augustine, rester au fond de ce silence protecteur et ne pas savoir" (127) [I would have wanted to be able to stop Ma Augustine and remain wrapped in my protective silence and ignorance] (119). In this moment, the transmission of this trauma forces Lisette to ask herself questions about the ethical responsibility of her great-aunt: was it the right decision to kill in the name of freedom? Weren't those lives valuable in bondage? What does it also mean for Lisette, as a slave, who could have been killed by a similar action? Furthermore, this transmission of the past did not respond to her expectations of a heroic story. On the contrary, she

experiences emotional turmoil as she processes the testimony and makes sense of the truth. It is when she finds out that she is pregnant that she is able to understand the actions of her great-aunt Brigitte. Lisette finds inspiration in her strength to join slave maroons, promising herself that her daughter will be born free or not at all.

The Legacy of Slavery: Alienation and Madness in *Le livre d'Emma*

At the beginning of the novel, the reader learns that the main character Emma is staying in a psychiatric hospital under the care of Dr. MacLeod. He has to write a report to make recommendations about her mental state, indicate whether she can stand trial and find out the reason that drove her to kill her daughter. The reader learns fragments of the Emma's family history over the course of several sessions with the doctor and Flore the Haitian Creole interpreter. In the novel, Emma is a textual body that is seen and read by Dr. Macleod and by the newspapers: "une Noire sacrifie son enfant…une affaire de vaudou?" (16)[Black Woman sacrifices Her Child…A Voodoo Act] (18). The description puts forward cultural stereotypes, reducing her to a violent image and erasing the complexity of her act. In the press, the omission of her name makes her invisible and the association of voodoo with witchcraft perpetuates misconceptions about the religion. Similarly, in the psychiatric hospital, Emma is defined by her race and her room number which heighten her feelings of isolation in that environment

Through his professional distance, Dr. MacLeod fails to establish a rapport with Emma as he sees her as an object of study. His own misconceptions about her culture prevent him from understanding her choice to express herself in Creole, a contact language that developed during the slavery period. During his first encounter with Flore,

the Haitian Creole interpreter, Dr. MacLeod shares his incomprenhension regarding Emma's obsession with slave ships and the color of blue: "il n'y est question que du bleu: le bleu du ciel, le bleu de la mer, le bleu des peaux noires, et la folie qui serait venue dans les flancs des bateaux négriers. C'est tout ce que j'ai réussi à glaner de ses longs monologues" (8) [it's only about blueness : the blue of the sky, the blue of the sea, the blue of black people's skin, and about the madness which is supposed to have come over in the holds of the slave ships. This is all I've managed to glean from her long monologues] (10). Through these words, Emma reveals to Dr. MacLeod that the history of the transatlantic slavery is still very present in her life as she describes the blue and makes an association with the color of her skin. References to the sea and slave ships allude to the trauma of the middle passage especially as she names the resulting madness. She hopes that he can reflect on these words to ask additional questions about the impact of the slavery period in her individual life or her family's. Yet, for Dr. MacLeod, these narratives are not relevant for explaining Emma's actions. During the sessions, he listens to her without interrupting her, taking notes and at the end of the session, he leaves. In this dynamic, Dr. MacLeod does not ask questions or request clarifications and there is a silence regarding his thought-process and the content of his notes.

As a result, there is a tension in his relationship with Emma who challenges his authority on several occasions by calling him "Petit Docteur"[Little Doctor]. Emma also mocks his writing style especially his choice of words: "vous aviez des mots tellement longs…des phrases remplies de frisettes" (29) [you used such long words…sentences filled with flourishes"] (33). The word "frisettes" takes away the veracity of his report as it alludes to the use of overly embellished or superfluous words. Emma accuses him of

not writing down her story truthfully and misrepresenting her: " tu écriras tout de travers.Tu brouilleras les pistes, tu changeras les chiffres, tu diras ce que bon te semble, tu seras l'expert, et toi, tout le monde te croira, car ta parole est d'or, petit docteur, même lorsque tu ne sais rien, absolument rien de ce qui se cache sous ma peau" (35) [Another book(…) in which everything you write will be wrong. You will mix things up, you will change the figures, you will say whatever you want, you will be the expert, and you, Little Doctor, will be believed by everybody because your word is gold, even though you know nothing, absolutely nothing, of what is hidden under my skin] (39). In this moment, Emma realizes that his scientific perspective grants him power, authority and credibility in his professional circles even though he was unable to identify the layers of her trauma, where it originated and its nuances. The yuxtaposition of the words "expert" with "Little Doctor" reinforces her mistrust and her rejection of his voice. Lastly, in the original French text, Emma uses the informal you instead of the formal you used to mark respect and deference to an authority. Emma denies him this formal distance and by citing the different ways he will manipulate her words, she invalidates his narrative.

In the novel, Dr. MacLeod has the power and voice to contextualize the actions of Emma in the trial or press, and challenge the monolithic representation of her as a murderer, to a more complex character by putting forward the weight of intergenerational trauma of slavery. Nonetheless, in his analysis of her character, he does not see a correlation between that history and the present. He views Emma's references to slavery as an obsession and as a listener, he does not show empathy during their sessions. By searching for a cause and effect relationship between the murder and her failed dissertation defense, Dr. MacLeod's scientific approach impedes an understanding of

Emma's trauma, which he qualifies as madness. At the same time, listening attentively to her will require him to admit his own reluctance to confront that past particularly his own biaises about her racial identity. As a secondary witness, Dr. MacLeod is not receptive to Emma's testimony and he disregards it by repeating several times his conviction that the murder was premeditated. It is only towards the end of the novel that Emma reveals to Flore the interpreter the story of her ancestor Kilima who killed several children to spare them from a life in slavery. She waits as she did not trust Dr. MacLeod and she wanted to make sure that her testimony would not be used against her in the trial.

As Emma recalls the narration of Mattie, the last surviving family member of their ancestor Kilima, the transmission of the past is mediated by Emma and Mattie herself who is repeating the life story passed down to her. Mattie shares Kilima's memory when she realized that the history of slavery is not taught in schools and it is absent from the curriculum. In these moments of present-day Emma's narrative, she remembers the emotional difficulty she experienced as a child listening to Mattie, especially the acts of sexual assault and infanticide in her family history. Mattie also urges Emma to avoid any judgments against acts of infanticide but to understand them in their context. It was the refusal of mothers to see their daughters become slaves and even experience sexual trauma. As a child, Emma felt conflicted about these acts particularly how did Kilima and the others give themselves the authority to eliminate a life?

The young Emma also learns a lullaby in Swahili that strengthens her connection to previous generations: "Mattie m'avait enseigné cette chanson venue de l'autre côté de l'océan, et que les femmes avaient sauvée des cales des négriers" (143) [Mattie had taught me this song from the other side of the ocean, which the women had saved from

the holds of the slave ships]. This song symbolizes the preservation of cultural knowledge and memory. The adult Emma sings it often in the psychiatric hospital to feel connected to women in her families and their experiences of isolation and invisibility. As she recalls these memories, the present-day Emma is able to see a direct line between herself and these previous generations including similar experiences of racial discrimination. She also gains an awareness of the weight of shame and how it informed silences around that period: "Personne n'en parle parce que cela fait trop honte, trop mal" (171) [No one talks about it because it's too shameful, too hurtful] (188). For Emma, talking about slavery in the present would imply a critique, introspection and recognition of racial biais that some authority figures, like Dr. MacLeod are not willing to do.

For her part, Emma hopes that her dissertation will become a resource about the history of the slavery period. In her research, she examines the legacy of African women slaves and their contributions to the societies where they lived. In her investigations, she attempts to pinpoint the exact slave trade routes and look for reminders of the past in contemporary physical spaces. Yet, traces of slavery are absent and Emma is unable to reconcile her knowledge about these sites and the lack of evidence in the present society: "je m'en allais par les rues promener ma rage de Négresse, sur les quais de Nantes, de Bordeaux et de la Rochelle. J'arrêtais les passants, des ivrognes le plus souvent, pour leur demander s'ils savaient combien de sucre,combien de sang, combien d'esclaves, combien de lait de Négresse il avait fallu pour constuire une seule ville d'Europe. (131)[I went out into the streets to take my black woman's rage for a walk, on the docks of Nantes, of Bordeaux, and La Rochelle. I stopped passersby, most often drunkards, to ask them if they knew how much sugar, how much blood, how many slaves, how many black

women's milk had been needed to construct just one European country] (146). By making specific references to Nantes, Bordeaux and La Rochelle, Emma wishes to remind passersby the importance of these three ports during the slave trade. Each city played a central role in the traffic with Nantes being the largest slave port. Emma's rage aims to provoke a reaction about the legacy of the past yet her screams are unheard and perceived as a public disturbance. Consumed by the writing process and subject matter, Emma rewrites her dissertation multiple times with the objective of narrating events as truthfully as they occurred. She fails her dissertation defense twice in Bordeaux, France, and later in Montréal, Canada for lack of proof and coherence. Her desire for accuracy and the absence of information creates a tension in this writing process regarding the impossibility to recreate a true version of the facts.

Conclusion

In *Silencing the Past* (1995), the Haitian historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot shows the liminal space between history and fiction by stating that "human beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators (…) In vernacular use, history means both the facts of the matter and a narrative of those facts, both "what happened" and "that which is said to have happened" (2). It is this tension about the search of the truth and its impossibility that can be found in the novels by Marie-Célie Agnant and Évelyne Trouillot. Both Évelyne Trouillot and Marie-Célie Agnant portray main characters that demand to know the truth about the difficult choices some women in their families had to make in order to survive. Their search is motivated by a desire to feel connected to their grandmothers or previous generations and to comprehend how their life stories shape theirs as

granddaughters. For Lisette, the physical traits she shares with her great-aunt Brigitte reinforce a longing to get to know her. For Emma and Lisette, the limited time of the last surviving member adds a sense of urgency to their search of answers. Yet the initial reluctance from Mattie and Man Augustine has a protective function meant to protect the listener of the weight of intergenerational trauma and to shield the witness from the pain and distress caused by reliving the traumatic memories. Emma identifies with the alienation in Kilima's life story while Lisette finds in Brigitte strength to become a slave maroon. Both novels emphasize the complexity of ethical choice in the act of infanticide committed by Kilima and Brigitte. Mattie and Man Augustine remind that these acts must be understood in their own contexts instead of passing a judgment that might overlook their difficulty. Lisette and Emma also gain a deeper understanding of their place in their family tree by embracing the resilience as a common value that unites previous generations. At the same time, their pregnancies prompt them to revisit the actions of their ancestors to inform their choices. While Emma never explained the reason she killed her daughter Lola, she alluded to her wish of sparing her experiences of racial discrimination. For her part, Lisette embodies the resistance of her ancestors in her decision to fight for freedom for the next generation.

Chapter Four

Opening Dialogues: Museums and the History of Slavery in *Fe en disfraz*

"Ayé me dijite negro
y hoy te boy a contejtá:
Mi mai se sienta en la sala.
Y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?" (…)
Fortunato Vizcarrondo, *Dinga y mandinga* (1942)

In the poem "y tu agüela aonde ejtá", the Puerto Rican author Fortunato Vizcarrondo refers to the African heritage often overlooked in the construction of national identity in Puerto Rico. Throughout the poem, the question "y tu agüela, aonde ejtá?" [And where is your grandmother] functions as a chorus, referring to one's physical attributes, skin color and social status. Eventually, the question is a reminder that the African presence can be found undeniably in one's family genealogy. In "Mother Africa and la abuela puertorriqueña", David Akbar Gilliam claims that the question in Vizcarrondo's poem "powerfully captures the often ambiguous and contradictory attitude that Puerto Ricans have toward race-sometimes affirming, sometimes denying their connection to Africa" (57). Prior to *Dinga y Mandinga* (1942), the negrismo literary movement aimed to pay tribute and acknowledge the legacy of African cultures in Latin America and the Caribbean especially in Cuba and Puerto Rico. The publication of *Tuntún de paso y grifería* (1937), a collection of poems by Luis Palés Matos marked an important page in Puerto Rican Literature through the use of imagery and language inspired by the African presence in the island. Considered one of the fathers of the *negrismo* literary movement along with the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén, Luis Palés Matos has been heavily criticized by several scholars, including Richard Jackson, for perpetuating racial stereotypes from the nineteenth century. In *The Changing Face of*

Afro-Caribbean Cultural Identity (2010), Mamadou Badiane revisits these criticisms and offers a new reading of Palés Matos. Badiane argues that **"**when Palés Matos, Guillén, Tallet and Guirao wrote negrista poetry, they did it in order to remind people of the African presence in their Caribbean country; this was their way of renegotiating Afro-Caribbean cultural identity" (115). Women writers who participated in this male dominated literary movement offered a more intimate insight on their personal heritage. For instance, Julia de Burgos had also published a poem "ay, ay, ay de la grifa negra" (1938) which expresses pride to be a Puerto Rican of African descent. The poem makes a direct reference to the history of slavery by mentioning close ties to the subject's family: "dícenme que mi abuelo fue el esclavo/ por quien el amo dio treinta monedas/Ay, ay, ay, que el esclavo fue mi abuelo/Es mi pena, es mi pena"(157). By keeping the auxiliary "ser"and by inverting the subject and complement in the verses "mi abuelo fue el esclavo" [my grandfather was the slave], "el esclavo fue mi abuelo" [the slave was my grandfather] Julia de Burgos assumes the legacy of slavery in her own family tree. Furthermore, there is a play on the word "pena" which conveys sadness, sorrow, embarrassment or shame but the poem is truly a celebration of racial pride instead of denying African origins. In subsequent years, other writers such as Rosario Ferré in *Maldito* amor (1986) and Aurora Levins Morales in *Remedios* (1998) have continued to affirm that African presence in their texts.

In 2009, Dahlma Llanos Figueroa and Mayra Santos Febres published, respectively, *Daughters of the Stone* and *Fe en disfraz*, two novels that bring to light the experiences of African women slaves and their descendants from the colonial period to present times in Puerto Rico. *Daughters of the Stone* is Dahlma Llanos Figueroa's first

novel and the author recreates the lives of five generations of women in rural Puerto Rico. On her part, Mayra Santos Febres depicts the life of María Fernanda Verdejo, an Afro-Venezuelan researcher and museographer who is preparing an exhibition about women slaves in Chicago with a special focus on sexual abuses. Santos Febres and Figueroa offer narratives that encompass multiple geographical spaces (Venezuela, Brazil, Puerto Rico, the United States and an unnamed African country) and in which loneliness and violence inflicted on the body are experienced by the main characters across regions and time periods and exacerbated by prevalent social, racial and gender norms.

This fourth chapter is centered on the novel *Fe en disfraz* (2009) by Mayra Santos Febres. Through the main characters, Fe Verdejo and Martín Tirado, Mayra Santos Febres expands the focus on race in Puerto Rico to a transnational perspective revealing how experiences of people of African descent in Spanish-speaking countries has been generally overlooked in dominant western academic contexts. The first part of this chapter provides a brief summary of the novel, its reception in the secondary criticism and an analysis of the main character Fe Verdejo and the challenges she faces as an intellectual woman of color. Then, with the help of current museum theory, I will examine how the author showcases the difficulties of memorializing the history of slavery in the novel as Fe and Martín put together a museum exhibition, a website and a series of public lectures based on trial testimonies of women slaves found in historical archives. Santos Febres creates a parallel between the writing process of a historical narrative and the making of an exhibition by problematizing the role of Martín Tirado who fails to amend his research methodologies as he gives voice to the past and

perpetuates images of victims without agency. In the last section, I will study the representation of intergenerational trauma through the presence of a dress that reveals narratives of racial and social exclusion from the past to the present. I will also look at the essential role of this dress in the sexual encounters between Fe and Martín as it prompts an increasing awareness of the legacy of slavery in intimate relationships.

Summary of the novel and secondary criticism

Fe en disfraz is a short 115-page novel composed of fourteen brief chapters. As Nadia V. Celis and Juan Pablo Rivera observe, the novel stands out in Santos Febres' production for its brevity, its historical context based on the colonial period and the inclusion of testimonies from slave women. The story is told from the point of view of Martín Tirado, a young white man from Puerto Rico. He recently moved to Chicago in order to work with the scholar María Fernanda Verdejo also known as Fe. Martín will be assisting Fe in digitalizing legal documents and manuscripts that she found at the Newberry Library in Chicago. These documents are related to the history of slavery in Latin America and reveal accusations of sexual abuse made by slave women against their masters. Fe plans to launch an exhibition in a museum in Chicago and, with the help of Martín, make all the materials accessible online to a wider audience. They also plan to present a series of public lectures in Madrid and Salzburg to promote their work as they continue to put together the exhibition. The main storyline is set in the present and alternates with transcriptions of court proceedings from 1645-1785 of women slaves.

Throughout the novel, the reader barely hears Fe's voice. Rather, she is represented as a textual body that is read and interpreted by Martín. The reader only sees Fe through his eyes and discovers her full name only in chapter 18, when she briefly

discloses biographical information. Martin's perspective ranges from admiration to fear to lust. He admires her research project, the challenges that she has overcome as a scholar and he is also intrigued by her private nature. She is naturally withdrawn and her interaction with Martín is limited to work-related communication. Later, however, the two develop a secret intimate relationship that becomes a space where they explore their erotic desires. In those moments, Fe wears a dress that she brought from her research travels as an object to be exposed at the museum. The dress has a built-in harness made out of sharp wires and when worn, it rubs and scratches against Fe's skin causing it to bleed. By putting on the dress, Fe feels connected to the pain of former slaves who wore it, including the original owner Xica da Silva, a freed slave from Brazil. The novel ends on Halloween night with Martín getting ready to visit Fe for their third and last sexual encounter.

The novel is accompanied with a *nota de la autora* where Mayra Santos Febres shares her intention and the raison-d'être of the novel. In it, she states that "es una novela acerca de la memoria, de la herida que es recordar" (n.p)[it is a novel about memory, the wound that is the act of remembering]. Santos Febres describes her narrative as a collage as the novel consists of borrowed documents from different sources: "está montada sobre documentos falsos, falsificados, reescritos con retazas de declaraciones de esclavos que recogí de multiples fuentes primarias y secundarias; que recombine, traduje o que francamente inventé" [it consists of false, falsified documents rewritten with fragments of declarations from slaves that I took from many different primary and secondary sources that I recombined, translated or that, frankly, I invented]. Finally, the author lists key works in Afro-Latin American and Afro-Caribbean studies from the field of History and

Anthropology that served as references. The novel makes no explicit mention of the history of slavery in Puerto Rico. The author's overall intention is to understand how experiences of slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean are transmitted inside and outside academic circles.

Since its publication on 2009, four scholars Radost Rangelova, Zaira Rivera Casellas, Odette Casamayor-Cisneros and Chrissy B. Arce have analyzed the novel, specifically the representation of the female body, sexualized and racialized. Using Paul Gilroy's concept of the Black Atlantic and theories on neo-slave narratives, Radost Rangelova reads the novel as "a modern subversive slave narrative that inverts racial and gender hierarchies" (151). Rangelova proposes that the novel offers a new reading of the history of slavery especially by criticizing the privilege of Martín Tirado as a white man and as a historian. On the other hand, Zaira Rivera Casellas, Odette Casamayor-Cisneros and Chrissy B. Arce focus on the physical relationship between Tírado and Fe and interpret the meaning of the dress from different perspectives. Casellas and Casamayor-Cisneros have recognized the importance of *Fe en disfraz* as part of a corpus of texts in contemporary Puerto Rican literature that address silences about the history of slavery in the island. Casellas argues that the pain that Fe experiences when she wears the dress is related to the remembrance of a painful historical past: "las heridas abiertas despiertan el dolor del pasado, pero como un gesto necesario para imponerse a la renovación de la memorial racial" (113) [the open wounds revive the painful past but as a necessary gesture imperative for the renewal of a racial memory]. Casamayor-Cisneros studies how Fe attempts to build connections with the lives of African slaves by reliving some of their pains: "Fe Verdejo necesita además sentir en su cuerpo experiencias que no conoció

porque vive en el siglo XXI, pero con las que se siente esencialmente identificada. ¿Por qué se produce esta identificación? ¿Por ser mujer? ¿Por ser negra?" (143) [Furthermore, Fe Verdejo needs to feel in her body experiences that she did not know because she lives in the 21st century yet she deeply identifies with them. Why does this identification occur? Because she is a woman? Because she is black?]. Both Casellas and Casamayor-Cisneros privilege an analysis of the encounter of the two bodies and how in those moments Tirado and Verdejo are renegotiating racial and gender expectations. Lastly, Chrissy B. Arce analyzes in depth the nature of violence in the graphic descriptions of sexual abuses in the historical documents and the violent nature of Tirado and Verdejo's sexual encounters.

It is not surprising that the four scholars' core argument is based on how Santos Febres portrays characters that defy race, gender and class conventions because this optic defines her body of works. In her analysis of the novel *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* (2000), Irune Del Rio Gabiola concludes that "Santos Febres no sólo le otorga voz y visibilidad a cuerpos racializados, sino también a cuerpos socialmente excluidos como los de los pobres, los emigrantes y transexuales, cuyas vidas han estado marcadas por la violencia" (111) [Not only does Santos Febres give voice and visibility to racialized bodies, but also to bodies that are socially excluded such as those of the poor, the immigrants and the transexuals, whose lives have been marked by violence]. In *Fe en disfraz* Mayra Santos Febres adds a transnational dimension to the understanding of racial identities and perceptions as both characters interact outside of their homelands, in Chicago.Through an analysis of the hurdles that Fe encounters in her field, I argue that Mayra Santos Febres criticizes Western organizational structures in academia that

overlook the perspectives of peoples of African descent in Spanish countries by reinforcing traditional definitions of national identities. As a result, Fe's professional environment implicitly denies her a space that normalizes diverse racial identities, making her invisible as an Afro-Venezuelan and as an intellectual.

Overcoming Hurdles in the Production of Knowledge

In his first description of Fe Verdejo, Martín uses an antithesis as he realizes that her racial identity does not fit the standard image of an historian in their field. Martín recognizes her scholarly accomplishments when he cites the institutions where she conducted research and presents her as exceptional: "no abundan mujeres como Fe en esta disciplina; mujeres preparadas en Florencia, en México, con internados en el Museo de Historia Natural o en el Instituto Schomburg de Nueva York" (16) [there are not many women like Fe in this discipline; women trained in Florence, in Mexico, with internships at the Natural History Museum or at the Schomburg Center in New York]. The specific details of her accomplishments show, that despite her obvious merits, her presence still has to be justified. This is even more so pronounced as he names two other well-known male historians who work with her: "llegué a Chicago a trabajar con Fe Verdejo cinco años después de que ella armara su famosa exposición de esclavas manumisas de los siglos XVII y XVIII en Latinoamérica. Con ella ya habían colaborado Álvaro Márquez y Figurado Ortiz, historiadores bastante conocidos en el campo" (16) [I came to Chicago to work with Fe Verdejo five years after she put together her famous exhibition about freed women slaves of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Latin America. Álvaro Márquez and Figurado Ortiz, well-known historians in the field, had already collaborated with her]. The nuance in the two adjectives "famosa" and "conocidos" suggest that

Márquez and Ortiz are respected historians whereas Fe's exhibition was well received partly because of the collaboration. Martín repeats several variations of these descriptions realizing that his field is defined in gendered and racial terms that are mutually exclusive: "no son muchas las estrellas académicas con su preparación y que, como Fe, sean, a su vez, mujeres negras. Historiadores como Figurado Ortiz o como Márquez hay cientos de miles. Somos hombres de extensa preparación libresca" (17) [there are not many academic superstars with her training and who are black women like Fe. There are hundreds of thousands of historians like Figurado Ortiz or Márquez. We are men with an extensive bookish education]. As he includes himself in that line of historians, Fe stands out as an exception, a curiosity and a quiet reminder that she does not automatically belong there. At the same time through his observations, Martin does not question this absence of women of color in his field nor does he examine institutional factors that might prevent a wider inclusion. In his eyes, Fe's academic profile is unusual and the lack of other colleagues that look like her is to be expected. In his inner thoughts, he also analyzes the source of his attraction "Fe me atraía y me intimidaba. (..) Era mi jefe. Era una mujer negra. Estábamos en Chicago; ambos éramos inmigrantes, pero profesionales, contratados por una universidad" (34) [I was attracted and intimidated by Fe (...) She was my supervisor. She was a black woman. We were in Chicago, both of us were immigrants but professionals, hired by a university]. The full stop between Fe's rank and her racial identity might imply an uneasiness to fully accept her authority or that her presence in that circle is unsettling. This is accentuated by the fact that they share the same immigration status and pursue the same type of intellectual work. Through his

expressions of surprise, Martin is not aware of his own racial bias as a Puerto Rican man in regards to women of color, especially when they are successful.

The reader does not get a perspective of Fe's own thoughts about her place and role in her home department. That silence creates a tension between the way she is perceived by others and the uncertainty if her professional environment influences her decision to remain guarded. Martín also uses adjectives devoid of life to describe her such as "inescrutable" (35) [inscrutable] or "un espectro" (37) [a ghost], highlighting the lack of emotions. A mutual colleague even advices him to stay away from her: "no pierdas tu tiempo- me advirtió Baéz una vez que me sorprendió contemplándola desde el escritorio- debe ser tan fría como las vitrinas que ella misma monta. Todo lo que ha estudiado le mató el espíritu. Es una pena, porque todavía le quedan sus carnes de buena hembra"(35) [don't waste your time- Baéz warned me once when he caught me looking at her from the desk- she must be as cold as the glass displays that she is putting together. Everything that she has studied killed her spirit. It is too bad, she still has the body of a good woman]. In his comment, Baéz subjects Fe to his (white) male gaze defining her as cold, and without a spirit because she is an intellectual. At the same time, he sees her as an object of desire by referring to her body and femininity. The use of "deber ser"implies that there was not an attempt to get to know her and there is a negative judgement about the value of her work. The mention of the glass display suggests that Fe is watched and she is the object of their gaze in the office. As the main narrator, Martin also speaks on behalf of others to emphasize the lack of collegial relationship with Fe: "nadie sabía detalle alguno sobre su vida fuera de las paredes del seminario. Todos suponían que no la tenía" (35) [nobody knew any details about her life outside the walls of the seminary.

Everyone assumed that she did not have one]. Even though Fe is well respected for her academic achievements, the repeated displays of surprise about her and the assumptions about her personality become barriers that prevent a more welcoming and inclusive environment.

Fe's isolation in the field is also expressed by the difficulties she encounters to secure funding for her work because her research interests do not align with the priorities of her home department: "el Departamento de Estudios Latinoamericanos y su batallón de especialistas en Antropología Social tenía otras prioridades que no incluían la investigación histórica en tiempos coloniales (21) [The department of Latin American Studies and its battalion of specialists in Social Anthropology had other priorities that did not include historical research about the colonial period]. The exclusion of that period implies that the legacy of the colonial past is negligible for that department and by extension there is no space to study the history of Afro-Latin Americans and Afro-Caribbean. The lack of institutional support also reflects a rigid definition of the limits of the field and an unwillingness to explore the impact of the colonial period by providing research resources. Through this hurdle, Santos Febres presents a tension between the mission of the university, ready to fund research projects that will prepare students to succeed in their future professional careers and the relevance of Fe's archival work. With this refusal, questions that arise include why should a university allocate funding to study the colonial period? Who decides which research projects are more important than others and on what grounds? What are the long-term consequences of denying this support? Santos Febres proposes that by not revisiting the diversity of racial experiences in the colonial period, there is a risk of maintaining traditional definitions of national identities

that often exclude African heritages. This insight on the politics of research support gets more complex as the department favors research projects that will attract ex-alumni, especially Latino donors. This engagement with former students fosters a dynamic where the university is at the service of donors, promoting projects that will please them instead of narratives that will challenge or invite an introspection about their stance in terms of racial issues.

As Fe attempts to reframe her investigation to fit into the new parameters, there is a tension between the meaning of the category "Latino" and how it intersects with race and class. Initially, she shifts the focus to immigration in Chicago in order to identify prior movements before the arrival of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans: "Fe andaba buscando una prueba que diera con asentamientos peninsulares: comerciantes españoles, marinos portugueses, gente que corrobora la herencia europea de la comunidad latina de Chicago. Eso les interesaría a los ex alumnos (latinos y nouveaux riches) que, de vez en cuando rondaban el seminario" (22) [Fe was looking for proof of peninsular settlements: Spanish traders, Portuguese sailors, people who would confirm the European heritage of the Latino community of Chicago. This would be of interest to alumni (Latino and nouveaux riches) who came once in a while to the seminary]. However, in this context the definition of Latino heritage excludes African roots and most importantly puts forward a class issue. The targeted audience, the rich Latinos, is more interested in exploring concepts of whiteness which reinforces restrictive definitions of national identities. In the case of Fe, there are additional layers as her accomplishments grant her the respect of her field as a specialist and her rank in the department gives her authority and a way to maintain a certain professional distance with those with whom she interacts. At the same,

the lack of funding for her projects and compassion from her colleagues add feelings of not belonging. Martín is unable to see her beyond her racial identity and from his perspective being an intellectual and an Afro-Venezuelan seem to be opposite terms. In the end, Fe obtains funding by creating a dialogue between her topic and similar projects outside of her institution that look at the intersection of race, gender and civil rights. With this external funding, she is able to reach an international audience and renders visible enslaved experiences in the Spanish-speaking context through her exhibition. A brief review of new direction in theories on museum studies will present foundational questions that arise when exhibitions about that past are put together.

Behind the Scenes of Fe's Exhibition on Slavery

In *Museum Exhibition* (1996), David Dean argues that a museum's mission to educate the general public is achieved through the development of exhibitions that stimulate learning, exploring and curiosity. In order to prepare and evaluate an exhibition, Dean identifies the components of four key phases: conceptual, developmental, functional and assessment. These stages include the evaluation of available resources, the search of funding sources, putting together all the pieces and ordering them into a cohesive narrative. Therefore, an exhibition conveys a story informed by the choice of objects, the vision of a curator and is open to multiple interpretations. In the past twelve years, Anthony Tibbles (2005), Janet Marstine (2006) and Sharon MacDonald (2009) among others demonstrate that an exhibition about the history of slavery problematizes each one of those four phases because the curator must recognize layers of mediation and nuances of experiences in order to avoid a skewed representation.

In “Interpreting Transatlantic Slavery: the role of museums”, Anthony Tibbles investigates how museums in Europe and the United States have developed and amended their interpretation of materials to present a collection of objects and items that trace the history of transatlantic slavery. These revisions are in response to the demands of a public seeking a multicultural representation of their histories. From an institutional point of a view, there is a need to engage with local communities, especially those of African origin, by displaying their cultures and being sensitive to how historical discourses are conveyed. Tibbles analyzes the development of the former Transatlantic Slavery Gallery at the National Museums in Liverpool which became in 2007 the International Slavery Museum. He points out the difficulties related to the planning and development stages as outlined by David Dean specifically: “who does it? Who pays for it? Where do you do it? What approach does one adopt? Whose history is it? Who organizes and controls the process?” (n.p). Tibbles also says that: “many African artifacts have traditionally been seen from a European perspective, the information recorded is often poor, inaccurate, partial, in more than one respect” (n.p). In addition, Tibbles elaborates that there is an imbalance in the number of images: “ there are plenty of portraits of Liverpool slave traders but there are precious few representations of Africans, of any standing (…) and there are almost no images by Africans themselves” (n.p). His remarks about the origin and meaning of objects indicate an overabundance of perspectives from the perpetrators and not enough materials to offer a counter-balance to their point of view.

The work of Janet Marstine in *New Museum Theory and Practice* (2006) echoes his arguments. Marstine problematizes the concept of authenticity of objects housed in museums which are often perceived as unchanged over time. She explains that: “we have

a tendency to see museum objects as unmediated anchors to the past (…). Museums are not neutral spaces that speak with one institutional, authoritative voice. Museums are about individuals making subjective choices" (2). Her arguments reveal a tension between the visitor's expectation of museums as sites of truthful representations of the past and the reality that narratives have been mediated and arranged by the curator. Marstine reflects the change direction in missions of museums "from a site of worship and awe to one of discourse and critical reflection that is committed to examining unsettling histories with sensitivity to all parties (…) New museum theory is about decolonizing, giving those represented control of their own cultural heritage" (5). This shift in the roles of museums is even more pronounced in portraying traumatic events. Sharon MacDonald coins the term "difficult heritage" to define historical events that are too painful to talk about in the present day. In *Difficult Heritage* (2009), MacDonald turns towards the context of the city of Nuremberg in Germany to find out how a past with a violent history interacts with the present time and shapes articulations of national identities. She explains that "difficult heritage may also be troublesome because it threatens to break through into the present in disruptive ways, opening up social divisions, perhaps by playing into imagined, even nightmarish, futures" (1). She is concerned by how a public exhibition can portray a painful history in an objective yet engaging manner. At the same time, by revisiting this past, there is a fear of retribution or blaming parties who inflicted that pain. On his part, in "How we study history museums or cultural studies at Monticello" Eric Gable proposes that there is a negotiation process in the versions of the past in museums: "The history they produce is a cacophonous outcome of contest and compromise. The shape public history takes in a museum is a

product of negotiation among the (at times deeply divided) professional historians and the (often factionalized) public at large" (110). It is this negotiation between the expectations of a spectator and the museum as a site of knowledge that is at the core of these new developments in museum theories. This shift also indicates an awareness to foster inclusive narratives that highlight more complex understandings of the past.

In Santos Febres' *Fe en disfraz,* the lack of first person narratives in the archive is first presented as a difficulty to memorialize the history of slavery in Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean. Martín acknowledges that absence of documents in contrast to the Anglophone context: "en inglés, existen miles de declaraciones de esclavos que dan su testimonio en contra de la esclavitud"(22) [in English, there are thousands of declarations by slaves who testify against slavery] (22). This remark is followed by a list of well-known abolitionist works in the United States in comparison to two testimonies in Cuba. Nonetheless, there are several administrative documents that can give some insight about racial experiences like the trial testimonies that Fe found in the archives. The nature of these documents might also create a confusion on how to classify them, read them and use them as texts about the colonial period. For instance, the collection that Fe found does not have a name: "un detalle resultaba curioso: la colección no tenía nombre. No estaba fichada. Por más que lo intentó, Fe no logró encontrar trazas de quién donó al seminario semejante recopilación" (22) [one detail seemed odd: the collection did not have a name. It was not on file. Despite her efforts, Fe did not manage to find traces of the person who donated to the center such a collection] (22). The unknown and mysterious origin of this collection add uncertainty about the ways to contextualize the documents, to find out the results of the trials or pursue further investigations. However,

the actions of creating an exhibition and a website around these voices indicate that all memories about enslaved experiences makeup a complex comprehension and should be remembered. In "What memories are we talking about?", Elizabeth Jelin makes a distinction between active memories which require the interpretation of facts and negotiating meaning and passive memories which are "archived in people's minds, in registers, in public and private archives, in electronic formats, and in libraries" (12). Cultural institutions such as museums play an important role in recalling and giving meaning to the past and even have the ability to offer nuanced narratives which might have been unchallenged. Through exhibitions, museums invite an active engagement with the past and Jelin's concept of active memory illuminates that introspective process. In the novel, by confronting these trial testimonies, the viewer of the exhibition or website will need to make sense of them, reflect on their meaning and be engaged. Santos Febres goes further by showing that the person who writes the accompanying annotations holds a powerful role by guiding the interpretation of the documents and influencing the overall tone of the narrative that transmits the past.

Behind the scenes, responsibilities between Fe and Martín are well divided as Fe sends him the documents and he uses technology to rearrange them and write captions and notes assigning meaning to each item. He describes his contribution as "mi fuerte es la restauración y preservación de documentos históricos por medio de la digitalización (17)" [my strength is the restoration and preservation of historical documents by means of digitalization], adding his role as "recompongo (e ilustro) fragmentos del pasado" (17) [I recompose (and illustrate) fragments of the past]. Since the novel is told from Martín's point of view, there is a tension that arise between his confidence that his training has

prepared him well to complete the tasks and the sensitivity of the project that requires a different approach. Throughout the text, Martín does not acknowledge that the court testimonies he receives are highly mediated narratives that need to be interpreted in their own contexts. The testimonies narrate violent sexual abuses from women slaves seeking justice. Yet the accusations are not told from a first person point of view but from the perspective of the figure who wrote them down, using legal narrative conventions. Martín does not look beyond the written content as he prepares his illustrations: what is unsaid? how did the women slaves use the legal word to assert their rights? Are they represented only as victims? What are the ways to show the violent content? What kind of visual aids prompt an emotional reaction? There is not a resolution to these questions and there is also a silence about the parameters that he is using to order and organize the materials. Additional questions about the selection remain unanswered: which voices will be disregarded? Which ones will receive more attention? Is there a common thread other than violence?

These preoccupations reveal that the memorialization of the history of slavery has to be carefully negotiated between the parties working on the exhibition to make sure that the overall narrative does not simplify experiences or perpetuate prior visualizations about the period. Santos Febres presents that the making of an exhibition follows a similar process to writing fiction. By giving direction and sense to these documents, Martín also rewrites a part of the history and interprets the events according to his understanding of them. Preparing an exhibition becomes equivalent to (re)writing history and in the novel Martín perpetuates a simplifying perspective that does not acknowledge the role of mediation in the trials. In *Tropics of Discourse* (1978), Hayden White

emphasizes the fictional aspect of historical texts: "histories, then, are not only about events but also about the possible sets of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure" (94). In other words, White argues that the writing of history is influenced by the narrative strategies that the historian chooses to use and the purpose of the historical text. White coins the term "emplotment" to demonstrate that the historian has the ability to rearrange events in order to create a fiction that is influenced by his own cultural baggage, the language he uses and his overall agenda. White explains that the historian uses "a figurative language instead of a technical language" (94) because it is more accessible to a general audience and it has the ability to give a significant meaning to historical events.

Similarly, Martín rewrites the narratives, includes his own explanatory notes and even finds portraits of former slave masters for illustrations. He also approaches the materials from a Eurocentric perspective and his choices do not reflect a cultural sensitivity. For instance, he plans to incorporate chamber music or piano pieces from the Hungarian composer Franz Listz (1811-1886) as a sound effect. By including classical music meant for cultural appreciation or entertainment, Martín demeans the gravity of the subject matter and creates a distraction from the objective of the exhibtion. The emotionally charged topic requires a methodology that exposes the atrocities of the sexual abuses and humanizes the victims. Yet, Martín lacks the sensitivity needed to memorialize the trauma because he does not feel invested personally in Fe's project, often citing boredom. Furthermore, he finds enjoyment when he reads the descriptions of the assaults and gives himself pleasure imagining the scenes and the bodies of the slaves: "me dividía en dos: uno era el que leía y sentía aquella vergonzosa hambre. Otro Martín,

insumiso, se mantenía a raya. Era él quien recordaba datos que había leído antes sin prestarles demasiada atención" (46) [my self was divided in two: one was the Martín who was reading and feeling this shameful hunger. The other Martín, inflexible, would stay guarded. He was the one who recorded facts that he had read without paying much attention]. In those moments, Martín projects himself in the figure of the victimizer and perpetuates stereotypes of oversexualized black bodies. He finds excitement in a dynamic where racialized bodies become an object of his white male gaze and imagines himself in a position of power. By seeing himself as two entities, Martín recognizes his similarity with the perpretators and he dissociates himself from their actions through his work. Nonetheless, his work silences too the voices of the slaves as he recreates a mediated narrative by his reorganization of the materials, his understanding of the documents that erases the complexities of the accusations. For instance, in one of the testimonies, Diamantina seeks justice and talks to the governor Alonso Pires accusing the wife of her master don Tomás de Angueira for unjust violent acts while she is pregnant claiming her innocence. The accusation is narrated from the perspective of the colonial scribe who also adds that the abuse was well known by other members of the community. In her defense, the wife Doña Antonia blames Diamantina for her sexuality as a black woman, animalizing her and repeating several times "así son estas mujeres todas y como tal se comportan" (28) [this is how all these women are and how they behave themselves], reducing her to racial stereotypes of that time. Lastly, a religious figure Don Baldomero de la Paz facilitates a confession from Doña Antonia and rules in favor of Diamantina. In her accusation, the layers of mediation include the transcription of the colonial scribe,

racial stereotypes, religious and legal languages that Martín does not acknowledge when he prepares the exhibition thus simplifying a complex narrative.

A turning point in his work is when he expresses his wish to integrate real pictures of slaves: "sería un éxito si se pudiera encontrar algún dibujo de las mujeres, algún grabado, algo que las retrate en detalle" (52) [it would be a success if we could find a drawing of these women, a recording, something that describe them in detail]. Even though Fe explains that images existed for auction sales or when there was a crime, Tirado is not convinced and asks how they looked like:

> -¿A quiénes se habrían parecido esas mujeres?
>
> -¿No es obvio, Martín? Se parecían a mí.
>
> Me quedé mirando a Fe, en silencio. Curiosamente nunca antes me había detenido a pensar que sus esclavas se le parecieran. Que ella presente y ante mí, tuviera la misma tez, el mismo cuerpo que una esclava agredida hace más de doscientos años. Que el objeto de su estudio estuviera tan cerca de su piel (53).
>
> -These women, who did they look like?
>
> -Isn't it obvious, Martín? They looked like me.
>
> I looked at Fe in silence. Curiously, it has never occurred to me to think that her slaves looked like her. That she, present and before me, had the same skin tone, the same body as a slave who was assaulted more than two hundred years ago. That the object of her study was so close to her skin (53).

In this moment, Martín's utter surprise shows that he was unable to see the connection between the past and the present and grasp the importance of the project for an Afro-Latin American or Afro-Caribbean in the 21st century. While he focuses on the physical

resemblance, he fails to recognize an emotional similarity, which is Fe's difficulty to claim and carve a voice in an institution that does not fully see her without questioning her racial identity. He also creates a distance between himself and Fe's project with the use of "sus" [her] to refer to the slaves. Nonetheless, as a white man, employing "her slaves" is a form of dissociating himself to that past by refusing to acknowledge that the slaves are also "his slaves", that they are a part of his history and dehumanizes them more. Furthermore, this reinforces his perspective that the slaves are an object of Fe's study instead of seeing her work as a project that addresses an ethical responsibility to remember the past. As he completes the website, Martín does not question the balance between featuring the portraits of the slave masters and the absences of images of slaves as this imbalance privileges the perspective of the perpetrator. In other words, Martín's detachment keeps feeding a narrative of violence that silences even more the slaves featured in the court proceedings.

Even though the novel ends before the opening of the exhibition, Fe receives positive feedback when she presents part of their work at a research conference in Madrid and Salzburg. In these lectures, she uses Martín'illustrations to add a visual element to her talk and thanks him for his work: "me contaba cómo su conferencia había sido todo un éxito. Cómo rompió el molde de expectativas presentando la otra cara de la esclavitud, la que muestran los relatos de la esclavitud, la que muestran los relatos de sus esclavas que sin dejar de ser las víctimas azotadas por los amos se convierten en algo más (74) [She told me how the conference was a complete success. How she had exceeded all expectations by presenting the other face of slavery, the one the narratives of slavery show, the one shown by the stories of her slaves whom without ceasing to be victims

whipped by their masters become something else]. It is that nuanced narrative "algo más" [something else] (74) that defines the tone of the exhibition and change perspectives of slave women as victims. Fe was able to convey orally a more sensitive approach that humanizes and changes the dynamic from object of study to voices that deserve to be heard. Martín maintains the distance between himself and that history by repeating "sus esclavas" [her slaves]. In doing so, he does not partake in an introspective reflection of the meaning of that exhibition in his personal life as a man of European descent. This distance enables to avoid thinking about the weight of narratives of trauma in these court proceedings and feelings that might arise such as guilt, responsibility or blame. Through the meaning of the dress that Fe wears during their sexual encounters, Martín begins to gain consciousness of his privilege as a white man, becoming distressed and unable to sort through a range of new emotions.

Unmasking Intergenerational Trauma: the Legacy of Xica da Silva's Dress

In the novel, the dress functions as a site of memory as the history of the garment is tied to the slavery period in Latin America and reveals traumatic narratives of generations of women who experienced racial discrimination across time periods and regions. Fe found the dress in the Macaúbas convent in Minas Gerais (Brazil) and learned its history through the Mother Superior who warned her to never wear it: "este traje está habitado. Los arneses y la tela han bebido demasiado sudor y demasiadas penas" (77) [this dress is haunted. The harness and the fabric have drunk enough sweat and sorrow]. In her warning, the Mother Superior refers to the suffering of women who had worn the garment as freed slaves to be presented to Brazilian high society and were rejected for the

color of their skin. The repetition of these narratives of pain and shame permeates every fiber of the dress, rendering it a living testimony of those experiences. Her warning is meant to protect Fe from investigating further these memories and the repetition of "demasiadas" [enough] reinforce the need to move away from that past and keep the dress hidden. Moreover, the reference to sweat speak to the sacrifices and labor exploitation that went into the making of the dress: "el traje lo mandó a hacer en Portugal, con telas de seda cruda, pedrería, hilo de oro. De Oliveira quería que Xica respirara lujo, que aquel traje espantara todo recuerdo de esclavitud del cuerpo de su amante. (77) [the dress was sent to be made in Portugal, with raw silk fabric, precious stones, golden thread. De Oliveira wanted Xica to smell like luxury, he wanted the dress to frighten away any reminder of slavery in the body of his lover]. The rich elements of the dress make it a labor-intensive garment including the extraction of the precious stones that most probably required the labor of African slaves. There is also a dichotomy between the luxurious materials and the social status of the slave as De Oliveira implies that money can overlook and erase the weight of slavery. Yet underneath the dress, the skin color of Xica is inextricably tied to that past and De Oliveira's wish is an illusion for an unattainable social acceptance given the racial definitions of that time.

By wearing that dress on Halloween in Chicago, Fe makes visible these stories of slavery and racial discrimination, inserting them in the present on a night where real identities are supposed to be camouflaged. Nonetheless, she identifies with these narratives of isolation and sexual assault since they trigger her own recollection of intergenerational trauma in her family. In chapter 18, Fe shares her testimony that will be included in the exhibition thus reinforcing that remnants of the past are still living in the

present day by showing how they are inscribed in her skin and how they inform her being. In this testimony, Fe reveals that she is the product of rape and her mother was expelled for her inexplicable pregnancy in a boarding school supervised by nuns. The experience of Fe's mother is silenced twice, by the nuns who want to preserve their reputation and by Fe's grandmother who marries her off to an older man to maintain the honor and virtue of the family. This double silence denies Fe's mother of a space to process the sexual assault and to heal. When Fe's grandmother Raquel Verdejo sends her granddaughter to the same boarding school, she warns her not to bring shame to the family: "María Fernanda, no me falles. No traigas otra desgracia a esta casa- me dijo cuando se despidió" (88) [María Fernanda, do not let me down. Do not bring another shame in this house- she told me when she left]. By using Fe's full name, which is the same as her mother, the grandmother repeats a similar warning that she might have told her daughter years ago, emphasizing that the individual is responsible for the family honor and virtue. Yet, the grandmother perpetuates a patriarchal and even religious perspective that holds the woman responsible and guilty of sexual relationship outside the institution of marriage. This warning increases Fe's isolation from any social events to avoid a male gaze as she internalizes those words. She also finds a refuge in narratives of purity and whiteness: "yo quería ser como aquellas monjas, blancas, puras, como aquellas princesas (…) sabía que aquello no era para mí. Me lo recordaban las alumnas del colegio y el color de mi piel" (89) [I wanted to be like these nuns, White, pure, like these princesses(…) I knew that this was not for me. The students of the school and the color of my skin reminded me of that]. Fe's attraction to concepts of whiteness is her coping mechanism with racial discrimination, aspiring to be accepted by society and peers and

knowing that this wish is unattainable. She longs for a standard of purity to erase the stigma of shame in her family and the absence and lack of knowledge regarding her biological father. The school meant to give her an education and preparation to succeed becomes a stifling space as she is isolated for her racial and class identity: "era la única negra de la escuela, la única que no era hija de ricos" (89)[I was the only black in the school, the only one who was not a daughter of rich people]. In this double isolation, Fe emphasizes the lack of other faces that look like her but also an elite class that refuses to build a relationship with her. The rich and white students in the school perpetuate racial dynamics from the past of social exclusion. In her testimony Fe reveals for the first time that on her 15th birthday, she was sexually assaulted by a close member of her family whom her grandmother held in high esteem. She felt silenced by the credibility of the man who raped her and the initial warning of her grandmother that eliminated a space of trust to share this trauma. By breaking the silence about her sexual assault, Fe builds a transnational dialogue between the court proceedings, the dress and her testimony story as she shows a continuous historic line between the slavery period and the present. As an object, the dress narrates the stories of Xica da Silva, her daughters who wore it bearing witness to the vulnerabilities of racialized bodies and illustrating narratives of social exclusion, Fe identifies with the stories inscribed in the dress as the same narratives define her family history including sexual assault and trauma. By wearing the dress during her intimate encounters with Martín, Fe seeks to incite an awareness of the legacy of trauma when white men overly sexualize black bodies.

During the making of the exhibition, Martín and Fe begin an intimate relationship that follows a precise protocol as specified by Fe each October 31, on Halloween day.

The choice of that day also refers to the disguises they each have to wear: a white shirt and black pants for Martín and the dress that belonged to the slave Xica da Silva for Fe. On their first sexual encounter, Martín is surprised, taken aback and confused by Fe's instructions as she is setting clear boundaries about the act: "las indicaciones de Fe son claras y hay que seguirlas al pie de la letra. Son sus condiciones para nuestro encuentro." (15)[the instructions of Fe are clear and we have to follow them very precisely. Those are her conditions for our meeting]. Fe firmly asserts her voice and changes the dynamic of the relationship from her being an object of Martín's male gaze in the office to him being subject to her demands in her private home. Martín finds himself in a space defined by uncertainty, qualifying her demands as "un extraño rito" (14) [a strange rite] and he particularly does not understand her conditions regarding personal hygiene "no puedo disfrazar mi olor con colonia" (15) [I cannot disguise my smell with cologne]. In this demand, Martín has to present himself as his true self, in his natural smell and the instructions are meant to put him in a vulnerable state. His black and white outfit symbolizes the racial encounter and is also a reflection of Fe's own personal professional attire which she had carefully chosen to avoid attention on her body. By having Martín wears the same colors, Fe wants to communicate a tension of power by having him take off a similar outfit she uses to protect herself from male gazes.

In their first encounter, Martín loses the confidence he displays in his professional life and feels like prey in the hands of Fe as she dictates every step of the sexual act. In it, the dress worn by Fe pinches her skin making her bleed and it sometimes scratches Martín's body. Even though he finds pleasure in this dynamic, it also destabilizes him as he attempts to comprehend the ritual: "Fe Verdejo pagaba en sangre el placer de darme

placer" (58) [Fe Verdejo paid in blood the pleasure of giving me pleasure]. The root of his confusion lies in his incomprehension of Fe subjecting herself to pain by wearing the dress. At the same time, he realizes that by being a recipient of that sexual pleasure, Fe holds power over him in that process. The blood payment is reminiscent of narratives in the court proceedings specifically the violent descriptions of the sexual abuses and the additional punishments some of the slaves incurred when the judge ruled against them, accusing them of provoking the victimizer. The end of the act marks the first conversation that both of them have on a topic that is not related to their work and shifts the nature of the intimacy to confidence: "luego, hablamos un rato. Más bien, habló ella. Yo me limité a lamerle las heridas" (58) [later, we talked for a while. Well actually, she is the one who talked. I just licked her wounds]. In this moment, Martín is the listener, witnessing the history of the dress and the act of licking is meant to provide some relief to Fe and he is also absorbing internally narratives of pain. Martín not only sees her visible scars which were never exposed in the office space but he also becomes aware of the invisible scars of trauma that can be traced back to racial dynamics from the slavery period. In that sexual relationship, the dress facilitates the transmission of intergenerational trauma and for Martín, it creates uneasiness as he is confronting for the first time the legacy of white men oversexualizing black bodies and abusing them. He stars becoming aware of his own participation as he gives himself pleasure when he reads the court proceedings and being a complicit to the actions of the victimizers.

After the first encounter, Martín escapes to Puerto Rico and the arms of his girlfriend Agnés, yet the distance does not erase his turmoil and he does not know how to process his fear and shame. He also feels conflicted about the lies he tells about his

relationship with Fe, wearing a mask with Agnés when Fe obliges him to face his raw self-devoid of any artifices. As he buries himself into his work, he is unable to reconcile his carnal desire when he reads the court proceedings and his role as a historian in the exhibition. He dreads the second encounter because it forces him to look at his privilege as a white man and his lack of answer to erase this discomfort: "no me queda más que esa blancura que es mi herida. Fe me lo ha hecho ver, la herida que habita en mi piel" (20) [I have nothing left but this whitness which is my wound. Fe has made me see it, the wound that lives in my skin]. As this relationship develops with the making of the exhibition, he becomes aware that history is usually told from the perspective of a white man, like him, and his position gives him power to shape the narrative. Nonetheless, this awareness does not influence the way he is reorganizing materials for the exhibition. Instead he recognizes "nunca antes había notado que era una mirada triste (…) aquellos gestos de Fe no eran provocación, eran las cicatrices de su herida"(99)[I have never noticed until now that it was a sad look (…) those gestures of Fe were not a provocation, they were the scars of her wound]. As he sees Fe's sadness, Martín feels even more distraught because he does not know how to alleviate it nor how to address the responsibility he feels as a white man of being involved in this narrative of pain. In their third and last sexual encounter, Martín imagines the ways he can free himself and Fe of the weight of the past by destroying the dress and reversing the routine set by Fe to include his actions. From his perspective, this will lead to a renewal where they can explore new dynamics that are not defined by the intergenerational trauma: "hasta que olvidemos juntos quiénes hemos sido" (115) [until we forget together who we were]. Martín hopes that the destruction of

the dress will erase Fe's pain, his feelings of distress and result in new identities for them. Yet the author implies that remembering should be an invested responsibility for all.

Santos Febres uses layers of meta-writing to show a rewriting of the image of slave women through Fe's research and the museum exhibitions. Through the collaboration of Martín and Fe, the author highlights the changing nature of museums and problematizes the concept that it is a repository of authentic materials. By interrogating the voice who organizes the exhibition, Santos Febres unmasks an unresolved tension between Fe who produces the knowledge and Martín who narrates the story. How does one represent the history of slavery in a museum, who narrates it and what is the sought-after impact? Fe's motivations to put together the exhibition are to educate the public and to expose her research to a wider audience, but most importantly to honor the memory of the African slave women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Fe Verdejo feels a deep sense of identification with them especially the feelings of invisibility, loneliness and the sexual abuse that she had experienced as a teenager. Putting together the exhibition becomes a healing way to process her own trauma and rewrite the lives of women slaves in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Conclusion

Mayra Santos Febres first presents women of African descent in the colonial and contemporary as textual bodies that are solely interpreted and read by others as Fe is herself at the beginning of the novel by Martín and Baez. As their voices are modulated in court documents or presented through the eyes of others, the author highlights invisibility, loneliness and isolation as experiences that are lived across time. In the

novel, the preparation of the exhibition prompts question about the ways of representing the history of slavery, the mode of narration and the intention of the curator. One of her preoccupation is how a public exhibition can portray this painful history in an objective yet engaging manner. While she does not have specific answers, Santos Febres stresses the importance of self-awareness and the danger of oversimplifying narratives or perpetuating images of victimhood because this removes agency. This is only possible by cultivating engagement and a duty to remember. By setting the main action in Chicago, the author implies that increasing transnational dialogues leads to a more nuanced understanding of racial identities and this might be the key to inspiring similar conversations at the national level.

Conclusion

On August 18th 2015, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston launched the exhibition "Made in the Americas: the New World Discovers Asia" to illustrate the Asian influences in Colonial America particularly the exchange of artistic knowledge and trade between Spanish and Portuguese merchants with Japan, China and India. Among the featured objects, two paintings stood out to me for their representation of the diverse roles held by peoples of African descent. The opening piece "The Southern Barbarians Come to Trade" by the Japanese painter Kano Naizen (1570-1616) was a six panel folding screen dating back to the year 1600 depicting the arrival of Portuguese and Spanish traders in Japan. Several men of African descent could be seen by their side carrying sunshades, luggage or other objects and on the sailing ship as part of the crew or hoisting the mainsail. The information accompanying the screen suggested that the ships were probably heading for the Philippines, India and then Brazil or Mexico. The Japanese screen also raises a new set of questions: who were these black men and what was their social status at that time? Were there black women on board and what were their roles in these travels? How did they define themselves and how did their identities shift with these travels from South Iberia, Japan and South America? What kind of cultural, economic and social networks emerged in communities of African descent as a result of these movements?

The second painting was an early oil on canvas titled "de español y negra, mulatto" produced around 1760 by the Mexican painter José de Alcíbar (1730-1803). It showed a daily scene in the kitchen of a family composed of a Spanish father facing his son and the mother, a black woman looking lovingly at their child. The accompanying explanation stated: "so-called *casta* ("caste") paintings were made in numbered series to

provide a formulaic portrayal of the complex racial intermixing in viceregal Mexico" (n.p) thus illustrating multiple racial categories and their fluidity in colonial Mexico[20]. The exhibition focused on the husband's long white and blue coat which had patterns heavily inspired by Asian aesthetic influences. Yet, the mother occupied an active role as she was stirring a pot of hot chocolate presumably for all of them. The colors of her clothes, a mix of bright reds, blues and neutrals made her stand out in the middle ground area of the painting. Dangling pearl earrings and a red headband enhanced her facial features and could be indicators of the rank of her social class. In this exhibition meant to showcase transnational movements, these two works also serve as reminders of unexplored narratives regarding the African presence in Spain and Latin America beyond the triangular slave trade.

In the past three years, scholars such as Alex Borucki (2015) or Paulette Ramsay (2016) offer new directions in the field through their interdisciplinary investigations that reveal nuanced processes and interactions in the colonial period. For instance, Borucki examines the experiences of communities of African descent in the regions bordering the Río de la Plata in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay while Ramsay analyzes the literary and cultural production of Afro-Mexicans living in Costa Chica in Southern Mexico. Others like Miguel Ángel Rosales (2016) and Tamara Walker (2017) explore new angles such as Afro-Andalusian memories in flamenco or how slaves in Peru "shaped and negotiated ideas about beauty, status, and selfhood" (4) through the use of fine and elegant clothes. Similarly, the history of slavery has been increasingly at the forefront of national and international discussions as more institutions inquire about its legacy and remnants in

[20] For more information about the origin, meaning and function of casta paintings in Mexico and Peru, see Magali Carrera, Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith

contemporary societies. For instance, in the United States, several universities have been investigating their campus history and ties to the slavery period and even formed a consortium in 2015. That same year, the presidents of Sénégal, Mali, Haïti and France traveled to Guadeloupe to inaugurate the Mémorial ACTE, a museum dedicated to the history and memory of the slave trade. In 2016, the Smithsonian's National Museum of African-American History and Culture was opened to the public. Lastly in July 2017, Unesco added the Valongo Wharf, in Rio de Janeiro as a world heritage site. Discovered in 2011, the Valongo Wharf is said to be the only existing visible port where slaves arrived in Latin America.

Through trauma and memory lenses, this dissertation has unveiled new interpretations of historical archives in order to probe silences, gaps, assumptions and rewrite representations of black women during the colonial period and beyond. Each author conceived their novel from a fragment of a story found in archives and built upon fictionalized characters that are usually absent in national narratives of their respective countries. By inventing genealogies and family trees of ordinary women, each author inscribed them into real historical events blurring the lines between fiction and history. This approach results in an interrogation of the historical discourse whereas silences or omissions become powerful opportunities to investigate how African slaves and their descendants negotiated access to discursive, economic and cultural production spaces. My dissertation also adds lesser-known literary texts and novelists to the field of African diaspora, largely dominated by studies from the Anglophone World, Brazil and Cuba. The fluidity of racial categories in Colonial Latin America and South Iberia contribute a richer understanding of the history of slavery, in particular processes to claim citizenship,

property and freedom. Examining the countries of Peru and Ecuador also add narratives along the Pacific Ocean that are often overlooked as their communities are usually identified by their Indigenous heritages.

Through the theoretical frameworks of trauma and memory, I have found that each novel asserts that the legacy of slavery still haunts the present in varied forms. Luz Argentina Chiriboga, Lucía Charún-Illescas and Évelyne Trouillot show that the lack of physical traces of slavery in Ecuador, Peru and Haiti has contributed to its amnesia in official histories and its transmission. From their perspectives, revisiting the colonial period is essential in reviving instances where women slaves negotiated their social status and were active participants in the process of nation formation. Marie-Célie Agnant and Mayra Santos-Febres turn towards academia and cultural institutions to investigate the challenges to portray slavery given the absence of direct first voices. As the main characters, Emma Bratte and Fe Verdejo point out the problematics of reading between the lines of highly mediated historical narratives, they also seek ways to memorialize that past in their respective fields and assert its importance in understanding contemporary racial dynamics. Furthermore, their research prompt them to face intergenerational trauma of slavery and sexual assault in their own family trees. Agnant and Santos-Febres also draw parallels between experiences of prejudices and loneliness lived in the past and the present as external entities deny their voices and reduce them to social stereotypes.

In each novel, I have also found that silences are an integral part of the narrative and are as equally important to testimonials. First they are meant to break the absence of the perspectives of African slaves and their descendants in national discourses. Sharon MacDonald, Benjamin Richard and Ana Lucía Araujo among other scholars have

respectively used adjectives such as difficult, sensitive or uncomfortable to define a certain reluctance to talk about that period. Furthermore, each author includes a gendered reconstruction of the slave trade, middle passage and arrival to the new country where silences permeate each stage, hiding the violence incurred on the slave ships, the loss of dignity, moments of remembrance and the absence of words to describe trauma. Later silences convey active mechanisms to conceptualize resistance strategies and maintaining an image that hides signs of rebellion. Lastly, Chiriboga, Charún-Illescas and Trouillot feature silences as unanswered interrogations regarding the participation of Africans themselves (or recent freed characters) in the slave trade.

While the five authors do not claim to provide a veracity of facts, they achieve in creating textual spaces where black women are full participants in public realms and highly visible beyond national borders. In doing so, each novel becomes "a lieu de mémoire" as defined by Pierre Nora that offers a more tangible representation of the history of slavery outside of statistics, centered on individual and imagined voices that constantly negotiated tensions between their social status and self-presentation. In my first book project, I look forward to applying the same methodology to study authors from Colombia, Venezuela and Uruguay such Susana Cabrera or Virginia Brindis de Salas in conjunction with wills found at the Lilly Library. In this project, building from the definition of Heidi Feldman about the black Pacific to "describe a newly imagined diasporic community on the periphery of the black Atlantic"(206), I will analyze how these authors (re)construct racial and gendered identities of the colonial period and their readings of historical archives in this process.

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Education

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Spanish with a concentration in Hispanic Literatures
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Hispanic Literatures

B.A **Suffolk University,** Boston — 2004
Economics, minor in Spanish

Dissertation

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Director: Dr. Alejandro Mejías-López
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Honors, Fellowships and Teaching Awards

American Association of Teachers of Spanish and Portuguese- Indiana

EXTIMO Outstanding Spanish Teacher — 2016, 2015
(Exceptional Teaching Impact and Motivation Student Voice Award)

Indiana University

Future Faculty Teaching Fellowship — 2014-2015

Service-Learning Graduate Fellowship — 2013-2014

Lieber Memorial Distinguished Associate Instructor Teaching Award — 2013
University-wide award for Excellence in Teaching.
Only 2 awards are given per year throughout all 8 campuses.

Department of Spanish and Portuguese

Outstanding Associate Instructor Teaching Award — 2012

Excellence in Teaching Award — 2009-2010

Teaching and Research Interests

Spanish and French Language, Spanish in the Business World, Afro-Latin American

Literature, Spanish and French Caribbean Literatures, U.S Latino Literature, 19th and 20th centuries Latin American Literature, 20th and 21st centuries African Literature, African Literatures in Portuguese, Creative Writing, Service Learning

Teaching Experience

- Instructor of Spanish, Butler University, Indianapolis, IN 2014-Present

    - SP493 Exile and Diaspora in Literatures in Spanish
    - SP410 Communication Skills in Spanish
    - SP365 Hispanic Short Story
    - SP315 Spanish for Business
    - SP310 Spanish for Written Communication
    - SP 305 Spanish for Oral Communication
    - SP 204 Intermediate Spanish II
    - SP203 Intermediate Spanish I
    - FR203 Intermediate French I

- Invited Lecturer:

    - FR334 Introduction to Francophone Cultures

- Associate Instructor, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 2005-2014

    - S328 Introduction to Hispanic Literatures
    - S324 Introduction to the Study of Hispanic Cultures
    - S315 Spanish in the Business World
    - S310 Spanish Grammar and Composition
    - S308 Composition and Conversation in Spanish
    - S280 Spanish Grammar in Context
    - S275 Introduction to Hispanic Cultures
    - S250 Intermediate Spanish II
    - S200 Intermediate Spanish I
    - S105 Intensive Elementary Spanish

- Invited Lecturer:

    - S659 Topics in Colonial Spanish American Literature
    - S517 Methods of Teaching Spanish College
    - S417 Hispanic Poetry
    - S334 Panoramas of Hispanic Literatures
    - S317 Spanish Conversation and Diction

Other Teaching Related Experience

- French Tutor, Suffolk University, Boston 2000–2004

    - FR-305 Advanced Conversation and Composition
    - FR-T212 Business French Tutorial
    - FR-202 Intermediate French II
    - FR-201 Intermediate French I
    - FR-102 Elementary French II
    - FR-101 Elementary French I

- Study Group Leader in Microeconomics, Suffolk University, Boston 2001–2004

    - EC-102 Global Macroeconomics
    - EC-101 Applied Microeconomics

Translation Experience in Literature and Cinema

- "Ten Questions to Abderrahmane Sissako" 2015

- Ramaka, Joseph Gaï. Personal Interview 2015

- *It's My Man.* Dir. Joseph Gaï Ramaka. Film 2009
  Provided English-French translation on selected excerpts.

- Diop, Boubacar Boris Diop. Personal Interview. 2007
  Provided English-French on selected excerpts.

- Musariri, Blessing. *Rufaro's Day*. Harare: Longman Zimbabwe, 2000. 2005
  Translated the book into French

Creative Writing Publications

"Espoirs et rêves brisés." *Tropos* 32 (Spring 2006): 93-106.

Academic Service

<u>Butler University</u>

- Advisor to Spanish majors and minors 2017-Present
- Course Coordinator for 100-level classes 2017-Present
- Independent Studies Faculty Supervisor 2017-Present
- Member- Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes 2017-Present

- Member- Liberal Arts Essay Contest Committee 2014-Present
- Member- Top 15 Most Outstanding Students Committee 2016-2017

Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures

- French and Spanish interpreter volunteer for local high schools 2014- Present
- Director of Honors e-portfolio 2016-2017
- Advisor to Spanish majors and minors 2017-Present
- Course Coordinator for 100-level classes 2017-Present

Indiana University

- French Translator, Office of International Services 2014- 2015
- Guest Speaker, Teter Quadrangle Learning Community 2012
- Panelist, International Student Orientation 2011, 2009
- Panelist, Freshman Undergraduate Career Majors and Minors Fair 2011

Department of Spanish and Portuguese

- Member- 3rd Annual Spanish and Portuguese Song Festival 2013
- Member- Teaching Awards Committee 2012-2013
- Member- Lecture Committee 2012-2013
- Member- Graduate Student Advisory Committee 2010-2011
- Associate Editor, Chiricú Literary Journal 2010-2012

Bloomington High School South

- Invited Lecturer: "The Boom and Magical Realism" 2012

Professional Membership

Modern Language Association 2005-Present

Languages

- French: Native
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- Swahili: Heritage Speaker, Advanced Proficiency
- Portuguese: Intermediate Proficiency
- Italian: Intermediate Proficiency
- Kirundi: Heritage Speaker, Intermediate Reading and Writing Ability
- Wolof: Elementary Proficiency